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INDIAN HISTORY—A REVIEW

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FOREWORD

DR. Baij Nath Puri's "INDIAN HISTORY—A REVIEW" presents a bird's eye view of India's historical evolution from the earliest days to the post independence period. It is a history with a difference as it confines itself to the major lines of India's historical developments and does not burden itself with unnecessary names and details. Also Mr. Puri very rightly places greater emphasis on social and cultural developments and seeks to create a balance between political history and the social, economic and cultural development of the country. On the whole Mr. Puri may well be said to have been successful in weaving the pattern of India's chequered story.

To write in a small compass the history of a country with three thousand years of political development and an unbroken social life is always a difficult task not only because it has to be selective in its treatment, but because what is omitted or too briefly dealt with have often considerable importance in national history. All that one can expect to do is to provide a perspective and fill in such details as give to the whole a sense of continuity. That Mr. Puri has been able to do.

With many of his judgments I frankly confess I am not in agreement That is no doubt unavoidable in regard to Indian history where so many questions are still left undecided. Dogmatic assertions in respect of such matters in a book of this kind cannot, however, be said to add to its merits. To give only one instance. It is affirmed positively that Chandra Gupta Maurya was a kshatriya. The almost unanimous tradition in Hindu literature is, however, that he was a sudra. Nor is this allegation made to discredit him, as he is described as a *Vrishala* even in books favourable to the Mauryan cause. It may well be that Chandra Gupta was a Kshatriya as Jain tradition affirms: but a dogmatic statement that he was a Kshatriya

without producing any new evidence could not be said to add to the quality of the work.

Inspite, however, of such minor defects Dr. Puri's book cannot fail to be of great value to the layman as it provides him with a brief and readable history of India in its evolution.

K. M. Panikkar

PREFACE

TO STUDY the history of one's country is to know oneself. It is not an unvarnished record of wars and military expeditions, nor of the data of science for facile generalisations. History is not even a survey of political vicissitudes. It is rather a critical study of the native genius and spiritual urge which evermore shapes the destiny of a country. Foreign invasions, internal dissensions and political upheavals may curb or crush that spirit but cannot extinguish it. This living faith and genius alone sustain the man and preserve his culture and tradition through the ages.

The history of India ranging over nearly five thousands years centres round that vital and vigorous faith of the Indians in themselves as masters of their own destiny. The rise and fall, the glory and eclipse, and the culmination and declension of the various empires and changes of dynasties have never materially affected this factor in Indian history. In this short survey, an attempt has been made to focus the attention of the readers on the grand conception of unity in diversity and universal brotherhood. The eclectic element in Indian culture was responsible for the assimilation of the foreigners, and the expansion of this culture beyond India was remarkably fruitful. It did not aim at colonialism, but at Asian solidarity, and the grand monuments of Indo-China and Indonesia are an eloquent tribute to that spirit of India.

Another factor, worth stressing, is the conception of what the renowned Oxford thinker Freeman suggested the 'Unity of history'. We cannot dissect Indian history into parts naming them chronologically as ancient, mediaeval, and modern; or racially as Hindu, Muslim and British Periods. The Unity of Indian history has continued unbroken, and no political phase remains isolated. A study of this history ought to convince the reader of the fundamental unity of India.

The present book is meant for the layman who has neither the time nor the capacity to go into details. It is also expected to provide a perspective for those who may feel interested in Indian history. I have accepted the established views on many problems, but have tried to be original where necessary. It has, however, not been possible for me to cite the evidence as that might tax the ordinary reader. Thus on the controversial issue of Chandra Gupta Maurya's ancestry, I have accepted the testimony of the Pali literature where the word *Moriya*, evidently *Maurya*, occurs invariably as the name of a Kshatriya tribe (*Pali Khattiya*). It is said that the Moriyans were originally Sakyan princes of Kapilavastu, who escaped to the Himalaya regions to save themselves from the attacks of Vidudabha. (*Malalasekara: Dictionary of Pali Proper Names.* Vol. II. p. 673).

I am very much obliged to Sardar K. M. Panikkar for his appreciative and critical Foreword to my book. It was very kind of him to agree to my request. I am also thankful to my esteemed colleague Sri Sarva Daman Singh for going through the proofs and offering me useful suggestions. I shall be happy to receive comments and suggestions on the views expressed by me for future consideration.

BAIJ NATH PURI

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Prime Minister JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

THE HISTORIAN

CHAPTER I

THE GEOGRAPHICAL FACTOR IN INDIAN HISTORY

INDIAN history belies its geography. Though sealed off, and practically isolated from the rest of the world through the impregnable walls of the Himalayas stretching from the Karakoram to Arakan in the extreme east, and washed on its three sides by the vast ocean with its water touching the coast of Africa in the west and Malaya and Indonesia in the east, India failed to retain its isolationary character for a long time. Her people were not unaffected by those currents of cultural and political movements that swept over the country. The geographical factor, however, remained not only a distinguishing feature but the very foundation of all historical developments in India. Things should have been different had India not been protected by the Himalayas in the north which kept the Central Asian barbarian hordes at bay from the Indian subcontinent. Aryavarta and Madhyadesa, the land of the elite and learned people, the cradle of Indian civilization, apparently remained undisturbed by the inroads of these marauders who lost that vigour which brought them to the gate-way of India the moment they crossed the Khyber pass and settled down in the fertile valleys of the Indus and its affluents. Of the foreign races that came to India, except the Arabs in the seventh century A.D. and the Europeans in the fifteenth century onwards, others had to peel off their alien elements in them, and they were gradually absorbed in the socio-religious structure of the country. To this class may be assigned the Greeks, Parthians, Sakas, Kushanas and the Hunas. The Muslims, too, despite the religious zeal in them, could not disturb the social fabric of Indian culture, and in course of time there was a synthesis of the two cultures, popularly called the Indo-Muslim culture.

Gradual Advancement

The foreign races, commencing with the coming of the Aryans in India through the Khyber and Bolan passes, always faced the geographical factor in their advance into India rather boldly, but they could not overrun the country at a stretch. There has been not one instance in the whole history of India where an invader has marched from Afghanistan to Assam without any break. It was only through a process of gradual penetration, first from the northwest towards the east, and then further south crossing the Vindhyas, that the Aryan culture progressed. Besides the Himalayas with the mighty and lofty peaks preventing the incoming of the foreigners from the north, the role of the Vindhyas was no less important. Dividing the Deccan from the north, the Vindhyas helped in the development of Southern Indian culture which continued to retain its separate existence for a long time. The attempts of the rulers of Aryavarta embracing the Ganga valley to conquer and control, despite their military superiority, the whole of Deccan were never successful. Some of the rulers, like Chandragupta Maurya and Samudragupta, no doubt, conquered a considerable portion of the plateau, but their authority was never on a secure footing. The political failure did not affect the cultural move, namely the introduction of Sanskrit culture in the south. This movement might be called the Aryanisation of the South and it took a definite shape and form, as is evident from the Agastya tradition—the sage crossing the Vindhyas and proceeding towards the south but never to return.

It is well established from the River hymn of the Rigveda that the Aryan advancement was confined as far as the land watered by the Ganga, Yamuna, Sarasvati, Satadru and Parushni. With the further extension of Aryan colonisation in later periods, embracing the Daksinapatha or Southern India, 'the conception of the Motherland' is modified with a more befitting expression suited to the new geographical environment—the land watered by the Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Sarasvati, Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri. The limitations of a narrow outlook confined

to the Sapta-Sindhu region in the Rigvedic culture are replaced by a broader vision of the whole country which is dotted all over with sacred spots of pilgrimage. A Pauranic couplet represents India as the land of the seven mountains—Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya, Riksha, Suktiman, Vindhya and Paripatra—covering the Vindhyas with the eastern and western ranges, and those of the Eastern and Western Ghats. Among the seven sacred places mentioned in the same context are Kanchi or Conjeeveram, Avanti and Dvaravati or Dwarka in Kathiawar, besides those in the north—Ayodhya, Mathura, Hardwar and Kasi. The floating of the south in the Indian geographical horizon seems to be a *fait accompli* by the fourth century B.C., as is evident from the references to the places and kingdoms in that region in the comments of Katyayana on the Sutras of Panini, in the *Arthasastra* of Kautilya and the Buddhist *Jatakas*. The evidence, taken as a whole, unmistakably suggests that Indian political and cultural consciousness embraced the whole of India in which the tide of life was agitating, and in course of time it even overflowed the original confines of India and extended to the land in the east popularly called the Greater India or *Brihattara Bharata*.

The Grand Conception of the Motherland

The gradual expansion of Aryan culture from Northern India or Aryavarta, the land noted for Brahmanical sacrifice and spiritual eminence, to the south and even beyond was responsible for the sustained feeling of elevation and veneration of the Motherland—which is considered greater than even the bliss of heaven. This conception breathes a spirit of patriotism on a much higher and nobler level than that conveyed by the famous lines of Scott—"Breathes there the man, with soul so dead, who never to himself hath said: This is my own, my native land". Mother India was no longer the region of the Sapta Sindhu, Aryavarta or Madhyadesa—it was a grand one embracing the whole of this sub-continent. The fusion of the two groups of people living to the north and south of the Vindhyas and even those having their regional cultures in the extreme

south was now complete with the result that there was a continuous flow of people from the north towards the south and even beyond through the famous ports of Sopara, Broach, Tamralipti and Paloura. Northern India became connected with the south through trade routes. The geographical barriers seem to have been conquered and they could not stem the flow of Aryan culture in the south, nor was the Eastern Eldorado a mere dream or a subject of the Jataka stories. The ancient Indians colonised the eastern Archipelagos and set up kingdoms in South-East Asia which were centres of Ancient Indian culture and civilization. It was, thus, a triumph of man over nature, the conquest of geographical barriers, and it paved the way for Indian cultural unity.

It would be wrong to suppose that Indian culture remained in isolation and the country was unaffected by the waves of foreign currents that swept over the land from time to time. They, too, have left their imprints on Indian culture and thought. Though it is difficult to assess the individual contribution of these foreign races in India as they generally succumbed to the assimilating power of Indian culture, yet by sifting the historical data it may be possible to reveal the main currents and their force in Indian history from earliest times to the present day. There is, however, one point worth stressing, namely, "unity in diversity" in Indian history and culture. Geographical forces might have been responsible for the development of regional and local phases, but a composite culture for the whole of India was gradually evolved which sustained its vitality despite the political vicissitudes in the long and chequered history of the country for over five thousand years.

CHAPTER II

THE PRE-ARYAN URBAN CIVILISATION

THE commencement of Indian history has come to be looked upon in a broader sense as a process of Aryanisation of the vast continent bringing into the fold of Aryan culture and civilization peoples of various races who were living in India before the coming of the Aryans. It had been suggested by some scholars that the Aryans were of Indian origin, but it has been now more than amply demonstrated that the Aryans came from outside by the land route gradually moving towards the east. Archaeological exvacations in the Indus valley and in several sites in India, at Lothal in Ahmedabad, at Rangapur in Kathiawar and at Rupar in the Ambala district of the Punjab, have revealed that a large belt of the Indian sub-continent had numerous prosperous cities even before the coming of the Aryans into India. Their culture was an urban one, unlike the pastoral culture of the Rigvedic Aryans. It is supposed by some scholars to be Dravidian, but such an assumption involves a serious study of the problem in a wider perspective, and may be negatived by similar finds at several western Asian centres. The difficulty in giving a correct reading and interpretation of the Indus script, which is partly pictorial, and unilingual, stands in the way of scholars for pronouncing proper judgment on the antiquity and details of this civilisation. The nomenclature assigned to it may have to be revised in view of the finds of several such centres in India from Ambala in the north to Kathiawar in the west. We, therefore, propose to call it by a simpler name—'Pre-Aryan Urban Civilisation', instead of the 'Indus Valley Civilization'. Such a nomenclature is with reference to its date rather than due to geographical considerations.

Nature

The civilisation was urban with the well laid out and elaborate plans of high and huge buildings, facilities for the storage of food and water, adequate arrangements for defence, extensive public bath, culverts and drains in the streets. The finds of a variety of objects ranging from pieces of pottery to statuary, stone vessels, tools and utensils, toys, ornaments and jewelleries, with the use of different types of metals—gold and silver, copper, lead and tin—suggest that the people of this civilization were prosperous, self-sufficient and socially well-organized. In the sphere of religion probably they believed in the worship of the Mother Goddess, which flourished not only in India but also in western Asia. It is presumed by scholars like Sir John Marshall that the essential features of the Hindu religion as we know it today were probably present in Mohenjo-daro, and there is enough to presume from the finds of several objects of a religious nature that 'the religion of the Indus Valley people was the lineal progenitor of Hinduism'. The inscriptions on steatite seals, on small copper plaques and on a few broken pieces of pottery still baffle the scholars though several attempts have been made to read the language and contents of the seals.

Indo-Sumerian Contacts

The evidence for contact between the Indus Valley cities especially Mohenjo-daro and Harappa and those of Mesopotamia is evident from the finds of several seals in the western sites. These are important for shedding light on the cultural and commercial contacts between India and the western world, as they are equally helpful in fixing the date of this earliest phase of Indian civilisation. Some reference has been made to the finds of these seals—one of which was found by Sir Leonard Wooley at Ur in a tomb shaft ascribed by its discoverer to the second dynasty and dated at about 2800 B.C. This seal remains an isolated object found in the filling of a tomb shaft and some uncertainty attaches to this dating by Wooley. Five other seals have also been found or said to have come from Mesopotamia with dates more or less

uncertain. Frankfort's find of a seal in a well-defined archaeological stratum at Tell Asmar, the site of ancient Eshnunna in the desert about 50 miles north east of Baghdad, is a very decisive proof of Indo-Sumerian contacts in the third millenium B.C. The seal found in the stratum covering private houses dating from the time of the dynasty of Akkad (about 2500 B.C.) is non-Babylonian in character without any parallel among the thousands of other known seals.

The animals depicted on it and in procession are foreign to the Babylonians. The peculiarities of style connect it definitely with the Indus civilization, and, as pointed out by Frankfort, it actually bears signs of the Indus script. The convention in which the feet and ears and the folds in elephant's skin are represented, the peculiar rendering of the ears of the rhinoceros are identical with the Mohenjo-daro seals. There is no doubt, as suggested by Frankfort, that this seal was an importation from the Indus valley about 2500 B.C., and it does not remain isolated. The more common Indian seal form, a square stamp seal with a pierced knob on the back, bearing a design of concentric squares, is also found in the excavations. Necklaces of ordinary Akkadian beads containing sometimes beads of etched carnelian, kidney shaped inlays of bone, probably used for small statues, and potsherds showing a decoration with knobs, which is unknown in Babylonia but occurs at Mohenjo-daro, afford a valuable corroboration to the theory of Indo-Sumerian contacts in very early times.

The Eastern Expansion

This Pre-Aryan Indian civilisation flourished not only in the Indus valley with its chief centres at Harappa in the Montgomery district of the Punjab, Mohenjo-daro in the Larkana district, Sindh, and at several other sites in Lower Sindh and Baluchistan, but its traces are also found at Rupar, a small settlement on the Sutlej, at Rangapur in the Jhalwar district, at Lothal 30 miles north east of Rangapur and at a few other places. This suggests the

eastward expansion of this civilisation which was previously supposed to be confined to the Indus valley region alone. According to Prof. Gordon Childe, it must have embraced an area very much larger than either Egypt or Sumer. The arrival of the Harappans on the Sutlej seems to have been a continuing process, as is evident from the two main phases in the deposits of the Harappa culture. It is evident from the finds at the Pre-Aryan settlements in Kathiawar, mentioned above that the Mohenjo-daro people might have taken up the sea route as well in their eastern migration. While there is no evidence afforded by the Indus sites which could shed light on the end of this civilisation, the excavations in India are more decisive in their contributions on this point. The Rangapur excavation provides for the first time a continuous cultural sequence. Here the Pre-Aryan culture died a natural death. It gradually deteriorated and transformed itself into another culture.

CHAPTER III

THE ARYAN WAY

UNLIKE those of the Indus valley, the Aryans were a pastoral people who stepped into India sometime between the third and the second millenium B.C. and settled down in the region called the Sapta-Sindhu which became the cradle of the Rigvedic civilisation. The Aryan problem has been threshed out by scholars at considerable length and arguments for and against the immigration theory have been considered, but the swing of the pendulum seems to be on the side of the foreign origin of the Aryans. A very strong proof of this contention is the localization of the Rigvedic civilisation only in the western Punjab and Afghanistan rather than the whole of India. The geographical horizon of the Rigveda seems decisive in settling that the Aryans came from outside and the eastward advance of the Vedic culture associated with these pastoral people was a gradual process. The earliest book of humanity, namely, the Rigveda is associated with the Aryans and the work depicts not the dawn but the meridian of culture with its well developed social and economic life, high religious and intellectual ideas and ideals, and a strong racial complex.

The Age of the Rigveda

Before we pass on to portray the life of the people as we notice in the Rigveda, it is essential to discuss the age of this work. Scholars are generally of opinion that the question of the age of the Rigveda is closely associated with the entry of the Aryans into India, and the discovery of the Boghaz-Koi inscription in Mesopotamia and the Indus valley excavations have put a new complexion on the question. The internal evidence, adduced from the vast mass of Vedic literature—the period of stray hymns and the *Samhitas*, the *Brahmanas*, the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads*—suggests that a considerable time must have elapsed between one period and another, and Buddhism

anticipated the completeness of the four periods of Vedic literature. Assigning arbitrarily three to four hundred years for each period, the age of the Rigveda might be fixed at about 2000 B.C. The invocation of the Vedic divinities—Indra, Mitra Varuna and the two Asvini Kumars—for upholding the sanctity of the treaty between the Hitties and the Mitanies in the fourteenth century B.C. suggests that the Rigvedic civilization must have been considerably older so that in that period it was in a position to send off shoots from India to foreign lands. The external evidence seems to corroborate the suggestion of the internal and it appears that the decline of the Indus civilisation very probably coincided with the advent of the Aryans, as the Rupar and Lothal excavations have also brought out. Roughly c. 2000 B.C. might be assigned as the age of the Rigveda and the coming of the Aryans, though this momentous event may possibly have occurred a little earlier or later.

Life in the Rigveda

The Rigvedic people were simple, hard working, religious and enlightened, though they were suffering from a feeling of racial complex. There are hymns in the Rigveda invoking the divinities for protection and victory over the Dasyus, the natives with their separate language, culture and civilization, which was fairly well developed, and the Aryans were outnumbered. It was, therefore, natural for them to have their own way of life, segregating themselves from the local inhabitants because of their complexion. This policy did not work out, and should ever serve as a lesson of history. They could not afford to ignore them and in the battle of the ten kings, the non-Aryans also took part. The Indus valley people and probably others as well who were phallus worshippers, and dubbed as *Sisnadevas*, were gradually absorbed and their chief god, the *ekavrata*, was given a place in the Vedic pantheon. This was done in the period of the later Vedic civilisation. The social life of the Rigvedic people was an organised whole. Society

was patriarchal with the headship of the joint family passing on to the son after the death of the father. Women seem to have enjoyed a position of responsibility at home and restricted freedom outside. Marriages were generally arranged by the parents but sometimes the girls had their way. Caste system had not become an established institution, though there are symptoms of the formative stage in the *Purushasukta* hymn of the Rigveda. It seems that with the expansion of the Aryan settlement as a result of fresh conquests, arose the need for a *rajanya* class which could shoulder the responsibility of running the administration, and of keeping hold over the conquered territory. The Brahmin class arose to cater for the spiritual and religious needs of the people with the multiplex and complicated system of sacrifices and the growing mass of verbal ritual formulae. Agriculture and husbandry as well as trade and commerce were assigned to the third class known as the *Vaisyas*. This division of the social order was functional rather than hereditary. A hymn from the Rigveda is very specific in suggesting that birth in a particular family did not determine the profession, as the particular rishi in this hymn was a bard, his father a physician, and his mother a grinder of corn on stone.

The economic life of the Rigvedic Aryans centred round agriculture and cattle rearing and the former was very important in the Vedic economy. The agricultural methods were much improved and there are references to artificial irrigation from wells and channels. The staple food of the Vedic Aryans was barley (*yava*) and paddy (*dhanya*), but wheat (*godhuma*) and rice (*Vrihi*) were also grown. The domestication of cattles was encouraged and stress was laid by the poets on the possession and preservation of cows. Hunting was a good pastime for the Rajanya class, and also an avocation for the professional hunters. Craftsmen were not unknown and there are references to minor handicrafts. The weaver (*vaya*) was known with his warp (*otu*) and woof (*tantu*). The surplus products of

agriculture were exported from one district to another in caravans consisting of bullocks, packhorses and camels. There seem to be traces of the use of *nishka* as a sort of currency. The trading class was known as *panis* who traded both by land and sea.

The simplicity of the Vedic life contrasts with the elaboration of the religious side of life by the priests. The Rigveda does not suggest a primitive religious consciousness, but a synthesis of different religious views which must have been the result of much priestly effort. The religion is in essence simple with the great phenomena of nature conceived as alive and usually represented in anthropomorphic form. There are hymns and praise for different Vedic gods, but one particular Rik is very important and it has been the sheet anchor of Indian culture for thousands of years. It refers to Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni and Gartumman as manifestations of one supreme and ultimate spirit. This conception of eclecticism still dominates the Hindu mind and is the greatest legacy of the Rigvedic culture. Though there are references to sacrifices, they are not as elaborate as in the later Vedic period. The beginnings of philosophy are traced in the last book where the multiplicity of gods is questioned and the unity of the Universe is asserted.

The spiritual outlook is nowhere more manifest than in the sphere of education. Learning was pursued for the sake, and as a part of religion. The aim of the Rigvedic learning was to put men into direct relations with god. The Rigveda is a composite work, being the product of different Rishis of various ages, containing, besides hymns proper with invocations and sacrificial songs, secular poetry and philosophical speculations. The hymns were carefully conserved through the process of oral transmission from the preceptor to his pupils. The ladies, too, had their share in educational facilities. The disciplined rule of conduct with concentrated devotion to the teacher culminated in the realization of truth or the highest knowledge.

The Aryan way of life may, thus, be characterised as simple living and high thinking. These people had a social pattern of their own with values attached to group consciousness rather than to individual interests. The suppression of individual need before the greatest good of the greatest number seem to be the hallmark of the Rigvedic social order. A spirit of cooperation in economic enterprises and eclecticism in the sphere of religion were the characteristic features of this epoch in Indian history which left its stamp on the succeeding generations.

CHAPTER IV

THE AGE OF THE BUDDHA

THE sixth century B.C. is an important landmark in Indian history. It is noted for the rise of Buddhism which in course of time covered the whole of Asia, and still continues to be a living force. The growing mass of rituals and sacrifices culminating in the loss of life, the hegemony of the Brahmin priests and a false sense of superiority had embittered the relations between different communities. The so-called Sudras who were placed outside the orbit of Aryan culture needed some force to guide them and remove that state of despondency into which they had fallen. The time was ripe for religious upheaval, and the age witnessed the emergence of two master minds—Mahavira and Buddha—who ventured to show light to the world and give solace to the depressed, grieved and panic-stricken people. Both questioned the supremacy of the Brahmins and the efficacy of sacrifices but differed in their approach to the problem of the elimination of human sufferings. While Mahavira believed in abnegation, the self-sacrifice to gain control over the mind and the senses, Buddha stressed the following of the middle path eliminating both the Vedic sacrifices and the ascetic practices of the Brahmanas. His solution was an ethical ideal which was all comprehensive and universal in its application. At that time there were numerous ascetic orders which aimed at self-realization without any intermediary and were quite popular with the religious-minded people believing in self-mortification as the best way of realising the truth. This feature of religious life aimed at individual salvation rather than good for the masses. The emergence of Buddhism and the way shown by the Buddha was, thus, most opportune.

The Buddha Way

Gautama, popularly called the Buddha or the enlightened one, the son of a Sakyan nobleman, was deeply

moved by the miseries of humanity despite all the pleasures and comforts which could be accorded to a prince of the blue blood. In the prime of his youth when he was already the father of a child, he left home for homeliness to find a way out of the miseries of existence. Tapas or penance failed to give him solace and his gurus too could not afford him satisfaction. Without giving way to despondency, Gautama with his firm determination ultimately saw the light on the full moon day of the month of Vaisakha in his thirty-fifth year under the Bodhi Tree. With his first sermon in the Deer Park at Sarnath, where the five bhiksus who had earlier parted company with him joined his order, Gautama, the Buddha, commenced his missionary activity which ranged over a long period of forty-five years.

It has been suggested that Buddhism was a complete break-away from Brahmanism. On the other hand, Buddha adopted a rational attitude. His teaching was no doubt original, but not divorced from the truths noticed in the Upanishads. He accepted the Law of Karma and the doctrine of Rebirth as the common goal of Liberation from this eternal process of coming and going. He was, however, very critical of the efficacy of sacrifices and rituals for he firmly discarded happiness and prosperity which was sought at the price of others' sufferings. Sacrifice, according to him, was meaningless if it was supposed to bring fruit by killing another. He advised his followers to go up into the boat of knowledge, and quickly pass over the ocean of suffering.

His approach to the problem of the existing social structure is also worth attention. It is true that he belonged to the clan of the Sakyas who were noted for their purity of blood, but he neither accepted nor rejected the caste system. According to him it was not by birth but by deeds that one became a Brahmin or an outcaste. One should not ask about descent but only about conduct. Just as wood emits fire, similarly a firm *muni* even though belonging to a low family may become noble by his intellect. In the life and teachings of the Buddha we notice

that spirit of humility. He did not utter a word against the Brahmins, for he firmly believed that 'abuse that is not returned is like food rejected by the guest which reverts back to the host'. His attempt to build a social structure based on quality of status and freedom for all was only a move to renovate and not rebuild the existing one. He came into contact with persons of all walks of life from kings and princes to courtesans and the downtrodden. He was neither a Brahmin, nor a king's son, nor a Vaisya but a wandering mendicant and the truth proclaimed by him was open to all without any consideration of his caste. He was very kind and compassionate and did not hesitate in rejecting the royal invitation for a frugal meal at the house of the downtrodden.

Buddha's teachings especially appealed to the middle classes. He preached a new gospel acceptable to the common man with no secret formulae, no expensive sacrifice, and devoid of such deep mysteries, as one finds in the philosophy of the Upanishads. The simple teachings in the language of the masses could be followed even by a Sudra or an outcaste. The middle path shown by him was not a religious revelation but a social revolution as it embraced equality. The setting up of Buddhist monasteries where monks could reside followed next, and these centres were schools of discipline meant to elevate the people. The permission, given by the lord to the ladies to join his order, was another progressive step in this upheaval and the door for attaining spiritual salvation was opened to them.

Other Religious Thinkers

In that period there were many lights striving to pierce the gloom of ignorance and trying to uplift the masses from the slough of despondency. Of these Mahavira, born of Kshatriya parents at Vaisali, was senior to the Buddha. He too passed through different teachers and hermits and finally conquered the self at the age of forty-two. Founding a monastic order he tried to show the way of release from the pangs of rebirths. His order was open to all, and the lay hearers or Sravakas practised self-disci-

pline and followed the general rules of conduct assigned by the Master. There were also numerous heretical sects of importance in that period, and the names of some of the thinkers are worth mentioning. Makkhali Gosala, the leader of the Ajivikas, was an important personality. Another was Ajita Kesakambala. Both were radical thinkers. While the former questioned the law of Karma, the latter had no belief in the life after death. There were several other wandering teachers with their individual philosophical trends. It appears that it was an age of investigation into the mysteries of life in this world and the other.

Social and Economic Life

Society seems to have been prosperous, and the influence of the commercial class was felt even in the political field. The prosperous cities of Sravasti, Saketa, Kausambi, Varanasi, Vaisali, Rajagriha, Champa, Mathura and Ujjayini and many others were full of merchants and traders, and it seems that the national wealth of the country was immense. There were trade guilds—eighteen in number—with their heads known as sresthins who looked after the interests of the members of their profession, and advised the king of Magadha. Inland trade had much developed and distant centres were connected with each other. The rich mercantile class was deeply religious and did not shirk any responsibility when entrusted to it. A concrete illustration of Anathapindika, a merchant filling the foundations of the Jetavana vihara with gold coins, is an evidence of economic prosperity and religious devotion. The luxurious mansions and gardens owned by the middle class people is another evidence in this direction.

Towards Political Integration

The political condition of the country was one of disintegrated states—sixteen in number—which were very frequently quarrelling with each other. Among these the four important kingdoms were those of Magadha, Kosala, Vatsa and Avanti with their capitals at Rajagriha, Sravasti, Kausambi and Ujjayini respectively. The smaller states like those of Anga with its capital at Champa, and Kasi

which were quite close to the bigger ones failed to retain their independence for long. It was natural for the bigger powers to swallow them. In the struggle for supremacy that followed Magadha emerged triumphant, and in course of time the Magadhan empire under Bimbisara and Ajatasatru expanded considerably. Time was ripe for the integration of the dismembered units. The age of Magadhan imperialism began with Ajatsatru and it culminated with the rise of the Nandas. The smaller states like those of Kuru-Panchala and Surasena in Madhyadesa were assimilated in the Magadhan empire which remained a strong force and the main centre of political activity for a couple of centuries. The process of integration was complete in Northern India, but in the North-West, the position was different. The existence of a number of smaller states was an open invitation to an outside power to come and rule in that region. This was easily accepted and this north-western limb of India continued to be under foreign domination of the Achaemenians, followed by the invasion of Alexander, roughly for nearly two centuries.

CHAPTER V

INDIA, PERSIA AND GREECE

IN the sixth century B.C. when there was religious upheaval in Northern India, a political wave swept over North-west India resulting in the occupation of that region by the Achaemenians. The Indo-Iranian relations, then established on a political basis, can, however, be traced to a much earlier period with the Aryans and Iranians forming one homogeneous unit connected with ties of religion, language and culture. This is evident from several parallel references between the Rigveda and the Avesta, numerous common gods, particularly Indra, Mitra and Varuna, with the same conventional number thirty-three, the ceremony of Upanayana and the Haoma cult, the chief indicator of Indo-Iranian cultural unity. According to Herodotus, the father of history, the Persian religion of the Achaemenian age, agrees not at all well with the Gathas, but shows significant points of similarity with the Vedic religion. The ancient culture of Iran was hardly distinguishable from the ancient Aryan culture of India, as both emanated from a common source.

Indo-Persian Contact

With the end of the great Semitic Empires of western Asia, Cyrus, the Persian emperor, prepared a scheme of conquest which materialised in the time of his son Darius. The latter sent Scylax of Caryanda to explore the Indus region, and this was followed by the Iranian conquest. The region conquered formed the twentieth satrapy of the Persian empire. This province furnished an enormous tribute of 360 talents of gold dust and also a special light division to the Persian forces. At that time the gold fields of Dardistan produced immense quantity of gold and the story of the gold digging ants who kept constant watch became very familiar with the Greek historians. These ants were smaller than dogs but larger than foxes, and they hotly

pursued the gold diggers. The mastiffs were actually the ants of the gold mines. The Achaemenian control was nominal and it continued roughly till 330 B.C. when Alexander overran the whole of the Persian empire.

During this long period of nearly two centuries there was a good deal of cultural contact between the two countries. The Iranian influence is perceptible in the fields of religion and art. The development of Sun worship is probably an outcome of this cultural phase. In the realm of art, the Achaemenian artists had much to give to their Indian colleagues. The Asokan columns with the bell capitals and winged lions seem to suggest Persian influence. The rock inscriptions propagating his dharma may be compared with the similar practice of the Persian rulers —as for instance the Bahistan inscription. The Kharosthi script—written from right to left—which was adopted by Asoka for his North-western dominion was introduced by the Persians, and it continued to be used in that region till the fourth century A.D. It is very likely that there might have been an interchange of customs and manners. The Persians also opened the gateway of India to the western world. The empire of Darius extended as far as Greece in the west, and Indian troops under the command of the Persian Pharnazathres, formed a strong contingent of the Persian army of Xerxes at the famous battle of Plataea. With the gradual break-up of the Persian empire, the Indian Satrapy became independent and the vast belt of the North-west frontier and the Punjab disintegrated into numerous states, independent of each other but not on friendly terms. With the downfall of the Achaemenian empire, as a result of the Macedonian invasion, ends the important phase of Indo-Persian relations.

The Greeks in India

The shining Macedonian star Alexander suddenly appears in the last quarter of the fourth century B.C., when the ancient history of India lay enveloped in a brief confusion. The final stand of the Achaemenians at Arbela to resist the Greek invasion of Persia by Alexander having

failed, the road was clear for the Macedonian invader. Crossing the HinduKush, Alexander subdued the wild tribes dwelling in the mountains, and in 326 B.C. the Greek soldiers marched through the passes and entered India. The petty states were too much engrossed in their domestic quarrels and they failed to apprehend the common danger. Nevertheless, Alexander faced opposition and some of the Indian states and their rulers gave evidence of their pride and patriotism at the time of that national crisis. Instances are not rare when some states actually joined hands to present a stiff opposition. Astes, the ruler of Hastinagar, modern Charsadda in the Peshwar district, fell down fighting after a prolonged siege, while at Massaga the Indian soldiers who had come to help faced martyr's death. Crossing the river Indus, Alexander was welcomed by the king of Taxila, who offered him submission, soliciting the Macedonian help against his adversary Porus who ruled the country between the Jhelum and the Chenab. Luck did not favour the Indian patriot Porus who lost ground after a fierce battle, but not his throne. Alexander was shrewd enough to reconcile both Ambhi, the ruler of Taxila, and Porus who were restored in their dominions, acknowledging the suzerainty of the Macedonian overlord.

Alexander's genius and the endurance of his fighting force carried his expedition as far as the Beas. Worn out by years of warfare in foreign territory, and the fear of the mighty force of the Nandas with a strong army of 6,00,000 men compelled Alexander to revise his plans. He marched back to Jhelum and sailed down the river with his army accompanying him on both the sides. The expedition met desperate resistance from many independent republican states, especially the Malavas, and Alexander was actually wounded in one engagement. After ten months of severe fighting the Indus valley was subdued. The expedition reached Patala, and India ultimately saw the Yavana forces moving out on the homeward march nearly three years and a half after entering the confines of India. Alexander left through Baluchistan keeping near the coast with decimated

forces reaching his life journey's end at Babylon in 323 B.C.

The Rise of Indian Nationalism

Alexander had made arrangements for the administration of his Indian territory through Satraps—Indian and Greeks, but as soon as he was gone, revolts broke out making the positions of the Greek satraps untenable. The Greek rule was supported by an army of occupation comprising Macedonian soldiers and Greek mercenaries. Alexander had also planted several Greek colonies where small bodies of Europeans remained after the departure of the Macedonian lord but these also faded away soon. The murder of the Greek satrap Philip was the first step, and this was followed by a serious attempt to overthrow even the semblance of Greek authority. Political consciousness prompted the Indians to assert themselves. The way was being prepared for the emergence of a national hero who could integrate the dismembered fabrics of the Indian political texture. It was not ere long that Chandra Gupta Maurya, a scion of the Kshatriya family, took advantage of the situation and with the help of the Indian Machiavelli, Kautilya, he conquered the kingdom of the Nandas in Magadha and also extended his territory after terrific military expeditions in all directions culminating in the establishment of a mighty empire. The political scene had completely changed when Selukus the Macedonian general wanted to follow in the footsteps of his master less than two decades after Alexander's invasion. This later history is a record of achievements of Chandragupta and the triumph of his minister's far sighted policy.

CHAPTER VI

CHANDRAGUPTA, KAUTILYA AND MEGASTHENES

THE curtain rises in 321 B.C. when Chandragupta, a Kshatriya with blue blood running in his veins, who had occasion to watch the campaign of Alexander and its political repercussions rather closely, comes on the political stage with his mentor Chanakya also called Kautilya. Alexander's sudden death, the partition of his empire among his generals, the era of national awakening and the dissatisfaction at the Magadha court were contributory factors in the rise of this ambitious young man. He led a military rising in the Punjab, resulting in the extermination of the Macedonian garrisons, and with the help of Paurava, an ally, he brought about a dynastic revolution in Magadha overthrowing the last Nanda ruler. The ally, too, met his end through a clever device of his guru in passing on the beautiful Vishakanya to him; and Chandragupta ascended the throne at Pataliputra. The glory of the Achaemenian cities now passed to the Indian metropolis.

Political Unity

With the foundation of the Mauryan rule, political unity was established in the country and as a result of wide conquests the Mauryan empire extended from sea to sea, and from the Hindu Kush and Himalayas in the north. to Mysore in the south. Thus commenced the age of national solidarity marked by Mauryan Imperialism, and also an era of international understanding. How well Chandragupta had used his time in consolidating his empire is seen in the year 306 B.C. when Selukos Nikator wanted to repeat the exploits of his master and was sadly disillusioned. The Greek general found himself face to face with a strong army, a consolidated empire and a determined national will to crush an invader venturing to interfere with the life and liberty of the people. He entered into an agreement with his Indian adversary who receiv-

ed Arachosia (Kandhar), Gedrosia (Baluchistan), Aria (Herat) and Paropanisadae (Kabul) in exchange for six hundred elephants. The alliance was cemented by the marriage between the Syrian princess and the Indian king, and the despatch of the Syrian ambassador, Megasthenes, to the Mauryan court at Pataliputra paved the ground for international understanding. Chandragupta emerged triumphant. The credit for this achievement is entirely due to the king-maker Chanakya, the author of the 'Indian Prince' *Arthasastra* which is a manual of diplomacy and statecraft.

International Understanding

While the Mauryan emperor was the first national ruler of India who ruled an extensive empire breaking the natural geographical barriers in the north-west, he was equally the pioneer in ushering in an era of international goodwill. We know it for certain that the Syrian and Mauryan monarchs maintained close and friendly relations for generations. Megasthenes had come from the Syrian court to Chandragupta, followed by Deimachus from the same place to his successor Bindusara. Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt had also sent an ambassador named Dionysius to the Mauryan court. The friendly relations originally established between the two nations remained unbroken. Athenaeus has preserved a story of certain strange drugs sent as a present by Chandragupta to Seleucus I. The same writer also refers to an anecdote concerning Bindusara, called Amitrochates, who wrote to his Syrian contemporary Antiochus I, asking him to buy and convey to him some sweet wine, some figs, and a sophist to teach him the science of disputation. Antiochus forwarded the figs and the wine, but explained that the sophist was not a marketable commodity among the Greeks. The intercourse was not confined to occasional social calls. Megasthenes had visited the Mauryan capital repeatedly and acquired first hand information about India which is preserved in later Greek writings. It is very likely that other Greek states must have been drawn into the circle of friends, as is evident from the list of foreign rulers to whom Asoka had

despatched his religious emissaries to propagate his Dharma .

India as known to the Greeks

Alexander had with him a number of historians—Aristobolus, Nearchus and Onesikritus—who acquired a first hand knowledge of the region traversed by the Macedonian lord in North-west India and Sindh. They furnished a faithful account which is preserved by later Greek writers, particularly Strabo. Megasthenes, the Syrian envoy at Pataliputra, stayed there for a few years, and wrote a most valuable account of India which unfortunately is lost. We can, however, glean a lot from the extracts preserved by later historians. The account left by this envoy is underestimated and Megasthenes is reckoned by some in the list of those writers who are given to lying and the least worthy of credit; and he is ranked almost on a par with Ktesias. Strabo too accords him a place along with Deimachus in the rank of liars. The relative veracity of Megasthenes cannot be questioned as he related truthfully what he actually saw and what was told him by others. He described India in all its aspects, and in his work he has recalled a picture of the condition of India at a definite period which is all the more valuable. His vision extends from the emperor to the ordinary people and from the centrally organised machinery with the system of espionage to the Municipal administration at Pataliputra.

His most interesting account relates to contemporary Indian life. His description of the seven Indian tribes or classes is probably based on economic functions rather than on social divisions, and it is possible to bracket some tribes in one particular group to square his classification with the system known from Indian sources. He has contrasted the simplicity of Indians in other respects with their taste for finery and ornamentation. They wore dresses worked in gold and decorated with precious stones, and also flowered robes made of fine muslins. Attendants followed them with umbrellas. The people were fond of ornaments but

were frugal in their food. The country had already witnessed the rise of capitalism, the growth of trade unionism, and Megasthenes refers to industries as well. The armour makers and ship-builders received wages from the State. An account of ship-building is given by Pliny in his description of Tabropane or Ceylon. There are also references to manufacture of handicrafts, and joint enterprise with equitable distribution was not an unknown feature of economic life. Megasthenes also draws distinction between the followers of Siva and Krishna identified by him with Dionysus and Heracles respectively. His account of the Indian ascetics is graphic. They lived in a simple style, lying on pallots of straw and wearing deer skins. His description of Pataliputra, the Mauryan capital, is certainly based on personal observation. Neither Susa nor Ecbatana could vie with the beauty and grandeur of the Mauryan metropolis. Besides much else, calculated to excite admiration in the palace of the greatest of all the kings, the tame peacocks and domesticated pheasants in the shady groves and pastime grounds added beauty to the surrounding, and exhibited the artistic taste of the emperor.

Organised Administration

With the carving of an extensive empire, it was essential to frame a strong administrative machinery. The account given by Megasthenes, and details from Kautilya's work suggest that the country had an organised government with the sovereignty vesting in the king. The centre was administered from Pataliputra by the king himself who was the fountain of law, the highest court of justice, and the executive head of the state. As the supreme commander of the forces, he personally visited the battle field. The king was no doubt assisted by his *mantrins* or executive councillors and a strong bureaucracy of *amatyas* and *sachivas*. Princes were appointed as viceroys for the different units into which the empire was parcelled out, and they owed allegiance to the Emperor. Their seats were at Taxila, Ujjayini, Tosali and Suvarnagiri. The Municipal administration at Pataliputra engaged the special atten-

tion of the Syrian envoy. The capital, and probably other great cities of the empire were administered by six boards of municipal commissioners in charge of such subjects as industry, welfare of foreigners, registration of births and deaths, markets, weights and measures and prices, and the collection of taxes and tithes. Land, as usual, was the principal source of revenue of the state, its share being one-sixth of the produce. The principal highway from Pataliputra to the Frontier, constructed in eight stages with rest houses and other amenities for travellers in the way, had both commercial and strategic importance. The Emperor took no risk as regards his personal safety, as well as that of his empire. He employed a regular army of spies and organized the army on an elaborate system with its different wings placed under separate army boards. It was as a result of this strong administrative machinery based on the steel framework of bureaucracy, that the Mauryan empire remained intact for nearly a century and a half.

CHAPTER VII

ASOKA—THE PACIFIST

IN the annals of world's history, there is hardly any ruler, who can be compared to Asoka. Scholars have, at times, traced points of similarity, as for example, in the extension of his empire he has been equated with Charlemagne; he is the Indian Constantine in relation to Buddhism, and his kingdom of righteousness may be likened to that of David and Solomon. This Indian ruler, considered by H. G. Wells to be the world's greatest king, rightly deserves the honour accorded to him by historians—ancient and modern, eastern and western. Inheriting a vast empire, Asoka added only Kalinga to it in the eleventh year of his reign and this was a turning point in his career. *Bheri-ghosha,* the sound of the war drum, was silenced, and henceforth the atmosphere was vibrated with the thick air of *Dharma ghosha.* Asoka introduced the novel scheme of governing his empire not by the sword but by the rod of Dharma and righteousness. He was the first Indian ruler, may be the first in world's history, to conceive the idea of a welfare state and the moral uplift of the people. He sent emissaries to the neighbouring states of western Asia and Ceylon to preach his law of Dharma—the essence of all religions. This angel of peace seems to be the precursor of Pancasila in his relations with external powers. The manifold sides of his character and achievements can be portrayed in full.

Conception of a Welfare State

According to Asoka, the greatness of a ruler depends not upon the vastness of his empire, but on the progress of his people. True glory rests on the advancement of his people, their mental and moral progress, and the efforts made by the ruler to bring his schemes in this direction to fruition. The king and his people are inseparable, and both are bound to each other as parts of one composite whole.

He took positive steps for the uplift of the masses. He gave to his peoples belonging to different castes and communities certain ideals and rules of conduct. These sermons are inscribed on stone in different parts of his far-flung empire. As guardian of their well being, Asoka made a declaration at the outset that all men were his children, and, like an affectionate father, he desired every kind of happiness and prosperity for them both in this world and in the world beyond. His declaration that he would be ready to attend to public business at all hours and places even when attending to personal needs, infused in the minds of his people a feeling of devotion and satisfaction.

The appointment of a special set of officials called *Dharmamahamatras* to look after the welfare of his subjects, irrespective of their creed or community and without any distinction of status is a concrete evidence of the firm determination and iron will of the Mauryan emperor in this direction. The ladies, too, were not neglected and to supervise female morals *stri-adhyaksha-mahamatras* were appointed by the emperor. They probably looked after works of public utility, hospitals, medical aid etc. The quinquennial tours arranged by the officials at the behest of the emperor, kept him posted with the conditions of his subjects, their difficulties and steps taken for their amelioration. Asoka undertook many projects intended for the welfare of his people. These included the digging of wells, the planting of trees, the establishment of hospitals for the treatment of the people and animals and the development of highways to ensure smooth and safe traffic from one part of his empire to another. He advised his people and even those subdued by a conquest of delight not to be afraid of him, but trust him and receive in return from him not sorrow but happiness.

Secularism and Toleration

Asoka's greatness is also brought out by the way he solved the problem of religious animosity consequent to the existence of different religious groups in the country. Personally a Buddhist, Asoka did not foist his religion on the masses. The State Religion recommended by him for adop-

tion by all the classes and communities in his empire and even beyond was only a discipline based on the essence of all the religions. His state was not theocratic nor was he bigoted in his outlook. The India of his time breathed a healthy air of toleration and mutual goodwill. The Preamble of the famous Toleration Edict No. XII is a clear vindication of the secular character of his state. His Sacred and Gracious Majesty the king showed honour to all sects, and to all classes, ascetics as well as householders. He detested undue extolling of one's own religion by belittling or slighting that of another. A blind devotion to one's own sect utlimately resulted in that person doing considerable injury to himself and his faith. The king considered it desirable that the followers of different sects should be brought together in Concord *(Samavaya)*, so that they could be well informed or enlightened (*bahu-sruta*). It is not the bestowal of gifts and other forms of external honours that count. The real aim should be the achievement of the growth of *essentials* (*Saravriddhi*) of all religions and a broad and catholic outlook. The suggestions outlined by Asoka for cultivating that 'breadth of outlook' may well be analysed here.

According to him there is an element of truth in every religion, and the common doctrines can be accepted by all. The foundation of communal concord and religious harmony is the basic recognition of this fact. This is to be followed by restraint of speech without affecting the freedom of expression. Discussions in right spirit created a healthier atmosphere, and the width of learning was the surest antidote to sectarian outlook. With the breadth of knowledge followed a catholic outlook and wide vision. This spirit of religious toleration in a secular state is the priceless legacy inherited from the Mauryan emperor.

A Precursor of Pancasila

Asoka was a pioneer in restoring peace through non-violence. He stood for principles which can have universal application without reference to time. He ruled out war as a solution to the problems of the world and his peace missions to different countries in western Asia and Ceylon

were prompted by a spirit of service to humanity and not a desire to interfere with the internal sovereignty of those states. He not only spiritualised Indian politics, but he also made an earnest effort to bring round his contemporaries to his way of thinking. In achieving this end he sent abroad emissaries to preach his doctrine of love and toleration at the expense of the country. "The *Dharma-vijaya* or 'moral conquest' has been repeatedly won by him both in his dominions, and even among all the frontier peoples upto a limit of 600 yojanas embracing the territories of five Greek kings—Antiochos, Ptolemy, Antigonos, Magas and Alexander, and towards the south, among the Cholas, Pandyas, and as far as Tamraparni. Everywhere are people following the moral injunctions of His Sacred Majesty." By his thoughts and actions Asoka ushered in a new era with stress on non-violence and conquest through love.

The Indian Lingua Franca

The message of Asoka engraved on rocks or pillars, so that it remains imperishable and ineffaceable by the march of time, was meant for the masses all over his empire. The script employed is Kharosthi for the North-west province, and Brahmi for the rest of India, but the language is the same, except for very minor variations for the whole of his dominions. It is very striking that in Asokan times north and south, east and west, were all bound together with ties of language and religion. The linguistic problem was not even in the formative stage. Sanskrit was the language of the intelligents, as Prakrit was that of the masses. Asoka chose the language acceptable to all which could carry his message of peace and dharma to the remotest corner, and to the masses in general. Asoka had succeeded where succeeding generations have failed to knit together the diverse elements in Indian culture.

Asoka combined in himself all that was good and beautiful. By adopting a policy, which created an atmosphere of cordiality and peaceful relations at home and goodwill abroad, Asoka rightly deserves the epithet accorded to him as 'the greatest ruler of the world.'

CHAPTER VIII

THE BRAHMANICAL REVIVAL

THE ideals of non-violence, international understanding, disarmament and universal peace introduced by Asoka in his policy at home and relations abroad are sometimes misunderstood by scholars. They suggest that his policy rendered easy the success of foreign invasions, Greek and Turanian, that followed him, and Buddhist pacifism found its nemesis in the foundation of the Sunga empire. The morale of the people had considerably weakened, making them less fit for action; and the army refused to raise its finger when the last Mauryan emperor while reviewing his forces was bereft of his life by his own Commander-in-chief. This event happened within fifty years after the death of Asoka, and the vast empire tumbled. The period following witnessed the emergence of the Brahmin Sunga ruler Pushyamitra to power in Magadha, the Greeks in the Punjab, and local rulers like Kharavela in Kalinga. The process of disintegration had set in resulting in the rise of numerous states. Probably the view of these scholars may not be acceptable in full, but one thing is certain, namely the strong Brahmanical revival that followed.

The Age of Patanjali

Patanjali, the last of the three sages who gave a finishing touch to Paninian system of grammar, is well remembered for his *Mahabhasya*. The importance of his work is considerably enhanced when one takes into account the circumstances and the people for whom this work was written. Patanjali in giving a new setting to the sutras of Panini, availed himself of the opportunity for presenting a picture of India of his time. He was a contemporary of Pushyamitra Sunga whom he mentions four times in his work, and to illustrate his comments he also notices contemporary events. One such event was the besiege of Saketa (Ayodhya) and Madhyamika (Chittor) by the Yavanas, and

another was the performance of horse sacrifice by Pushyamitra, with Patanjali and others taking part in it. He also refers to the court of the Sunga monarch. In drawing his illustrations from important contemporary events to make a deeper impression on the minds of his readers, Patanjali incidentally did a great service to scholarship, and it is possible to portray the condition of India of his time in its social, economic, religious, educational and literary aspects. The age witnessed two Yavana invasions, and the Greeks in one came as far as Pataliputra but returned because of trouble at home. The second attempt was repulsed and the Sunga monarch this time had an upper hand. The struggle between the two powers remained indecisive with the Indianised Greeks settled in the Punjab and the Sunga rulers in Magadha.

The influx of foreigners, their assimilation into the social scheme, and the relaxation of caste rules owing to mixed unions, did not take the Bhasyakara by surprise and he was anxious for the learned Brahmins called *Śishtas* preserving their purity of blood and speech. In his work he refers to the position of these Yavanas who were placed in the fourth grade with the concession that they were not ostracized, and the plate touched by them was not polluted. The noble ones were certainly placed in the second group of the Kshatriyas. Patanjali notices items of social life, like the family which was a homogeneous unit, items of food, dress and the position of women. They had considerable freedom and also enjoyed pastimes and recreations, like theatrical performances.

The advanced social organism had its impact on the economic life as well. People were prosperous and engaged in numerous avocations to which the Bhasyakara has referred. The developed economic life involved exchange and intensive use of coinage to which Patanjali makes repeated references. The materialistic side had not affected the academic atmosphere. The purpose of education was the attainment of knowledge. There were many master minds and thinkers—both Brahmanical and Buddhist—and

one of them had actual disputation with the Greek emperor Menander whom he converted to Buddhism.

Though the Sunga period is noted as the age of Brahmanical revival with Vedic sacrifices, Buddhism did not receive a set back as suggested in some works. The hostile attitude of the Sunga monarchs would never have allowed the setting up of the two beautiful stupas of Bharhut and Sanchi with their railings and beautifully carved sculptures suggesting devotion to the Tathagata. It is certainly true that the Vedic sacrifices were revived and the Vishnu-Vasudeva cult had fully evolved. Buddhism and Jainism also flourished and Mathura and Kalinga were important centres of the latter school of thought.

Indianised Greeks

Without any solitary exception, the Greeks in India were all assimilated in the Indian social structure. Society was elastic by nature and receptive in form, and the foreigners were assigned proper places. There is not one instance of a Brahmana Yavana, or a Vaisya Pahlava or Saka, but the second or the fourth grade was always open for them. During this period hundreds and thousands of Greeks who were the descendants of those left by Alexander in India, or fresh arrivals from Bactria were absorbed. The cases of three important personalities are worth mentioning. They are Demetrius, called Dattamitra, Menander known as Milinda whose discourses with Nagasena are annaled in the Pali work *Milindapanha,* and Heliodora, son of Dion, an ambassador from the Greek King Antialcidas to the court of the Sunga monarch Bhagabhadra who was a devotee of Vishnu. The last one had set up a Garuddhvaja in honour of the lord at Vidisa. These suggest that it was not only Buddhism which accepted outsiders as its members, but Bhagavatism, too, was not inactive in this direction. The assimilation of these foreigners, and their devotion to the religion of their adoption, gave an entirely new outlook to Buddhism. The ground was prepared for the emergence, later on, of a new school of art, popularly known as Gandhara art or Graeco-Buddhist art with the Buddhist subjects portrayed by the Indianised Greeks. It is a pity that

we have not come across any Brahmanical contribution of those artists, but the case of Heliodorus is very decisive in pronouncing that foreigners accepted both Buddhism and Brahmanism.

Bharhut and Sanchi

The Sunga period is notable for its contribution in the artistic field. The national school of art of the Mauryan period characterised by colossal mass on the one hand and court patronage on the other, assumed a democratic shape and became more popular with the masses. People from all walks of life joined hands in setting up railings and toranas round the stupas at Bharhut and Sanchi and their names are recorded. The Sunga art at Bharhut is the richest in its social contents representing the life of the people in full harmony with that of the Tathagata. Sanchi represents a later stage, as its toranas or beautiful gateways were set up in the Andhra period. It has been suggested that political relations, such as existed between the Indo-Greeks and the Sunga rulers of Vidisa close to Sanchi, made possible the utilisation of foreign artists in the Malawa school. This might be a far fetched suggestion, as the local artists were no less gifted and probably the schools of Bharhut and Sanchi owe much to Mathura. Though the North-western influence in Indian art centres might not be completely ruled out, it is manifest in the least. Mathura and Bodh-Gaya were also humming with artistic activity.

The Sunga period is not merely one of Brahmanical revival, it is noted for several other features as well—an era of artistic activity, religious devotion and literary production. The Sungas, after a rule of a hundred and twenty years, paved the way for the Andhras, a South Indian power, and henceforth the centre of gravity shifted to the other side of the Vindhyas.

CHAPTER IX

SOUTHERN INDIA

THE ancient culture of the Aryans symbolised by colour complex gradually brought within its fold the Dravidian people who too had a fairly advanced culture of their own with their pattern of social grouping based on functions. The Aryans who were haunted by colour consciousness seem to have given way and the Varnasrama dharma of the Aryans mingled with the group consciousness of the Dravidians resulting in a synthesis of the two. The assimilation of the two cultures into a uniform and united one must have been a long drawn-out process based on an understanding of different values. Though the advent of the Aryans in India might have been near about 2000 B.C., it is not till the fourth century B.C. that we hear of Aryan influence in the south. In the list of sixteen states in the time of the Buddha, only Assaka in the South with its capital Potana or Potali on the Narmada figures, though the two remotest states of the North-west frontier—Gandhara and Taxila—find a conspicuous place.

By the fourh century B.C., the neo-Aryan civilisation had penetrated the South. Megasthenes had heard of the Pandyas, ruled by a queen with a strong and well equipped army. Chandragupta Maurya extended his conquest upto the confines of the three Tamil Kingdoms—Chola, Pandya and Kerala—where Asoka had also sent his emissaries. Patanjali, the famous grammarian, is supposed by some scholars to be a native of Southern India as he mentions cities like Kanchi, and refers to lakes of the South called Sarasi. Even though his birth place is questioned, it cannot be denied that the Sage was familiar with the South. There are scores of references in the Buddhist literature suggesting South Indian scholars entering into disputation with those from the north and attaining distinction. South India comes into the full view by the

second century B.C., as is evident from the Hathigumpha inscription of king Kharavela of Kalinga who brought under his control practically a large part of Southern India. For two to three centuries, the Deccan continued to play an important role in Indian history with the famous line of the Satavahanas, or Andhras, her commerce with the western world and a foot board for emigration towards the Eastern Eldorado—Indo-China, Burma, Malaya and Indonesia. During this period the religious and artistic activity centred round the sylvan hills of the Western Ghats where Buddhist monks had carved out numerous caityas and monasteries for their permanent abode and worship. The contribution of this period can well be assessed with reference to the facts mentioned above.

Deccan in the Satavahana Period

The Satavahana period in Indian history is important for several reasons. This great dynasty covering nearly three centuries from B C. 73 to A.D. 218 (by computation) had several important rulers like Gautamiputra Satakarni. Vasishtiputra Pulumavi, and Yajnasri whose names suggest that possibly they were matriarchal kings—a feature of Southern Indian culture. The inscriptions, however, are very specific on their Brahmanical character and association with the performance of the Vedic sacrifices. They also brought about an integration of the north and the south with their empire extending from Sanchi to Konkan. They defeated the foreigners—Sakas, Yavanas and Pahlavas who were well settled in western India, and during this period there was intense commercial activity between India and the western world, and lastly it was an age of catholicism and even Brahmins took part in Buddhist dedications. The Buddhist mendicants were travelling freely from the Ghats to Konkan, and along the coast there were beautiful harbours.

The penetration of the Aryan culture in the South was complete. Brahmanism was in a flourishing condition and Satakarni I and his queen performed a number of sacrifices to the tune of twenty, including Asvamedha, Gajayana,

Rajasuya, and a few others, and gave handsome dakshinas to the Brahmins in the form of villages, coins, milch cows, elephants and horses, and gold and silver. The highest number of coins given is 11,000 and of Karshapanas 24,000 This was Brahmanism in its full bloom. The gods invoked were Dharma, Indra, Sankarsana and Vasudeva suggesting early prevalence of Vaisnavism and Krishna cult in the south. Siva was also worshipped in his different names—Siva, Mahadeva, Bhava and Bhutapala—along with his son Skanda.

The foreigners who had settled down in western India accepted either Buddhism or Brahmanism, adopted Hindu names and made gifts to their respective orders. Usavadata (Skt. Rishabhadatta, son of Dinika, and son-in-law of Nahapana, the Saka Ksharata ruler,) gave three hundred thousand kine to the Brahmins, furnished eight Brahmins with the means of marrying their daughters, and annually fed one hundred thousand Brahmins. He was a staunch supporter of Brahmanical hierarchy. The age was also noted for catholicity and even Buddhists were favoured by Brahmin patrons. The establishment of matrimonial relations between the family of Rudradaman, a Saka, and the Andhra Satavahanas of the Ikshvaku Kshatriya family suggests that the process of assimilating foreigners was not unknown in southern India.

It was also an age of economic enterprise and accumulation of national wealth. The institution of *Sreni* or craft guilds was borrowed from the north where it was known as early as the sixth century B.C. The Nasik inscriptions mention several such guilds like those of oil-millers (*tilapishaka*), artisans working in hydraulic engines (*odayantrika*), potters (*kulairika*), and weavers (*kolikanikaya*); and two others of corn dealers (*dhannikas*) and baziers (*kamsakaras*). These unions looked after the interests of their members and also served as banks accepting fixed deposits on interest. Smooth communication between the different parts of the Deccan and the north ensured flourishing trade and commerce.

India and the Roman World

The finds of huge mass of Roman coins in Southern India, and the Arikamedu excavations in Pondicherry have brought to light extensive trade and commercial relations between India and the western world. The Tamil literature also refers to the Yavana merchants in the south, and the western writers have mentioned important Indian marts and sea ports like Nelkyanda (in Cochin), Muziris (back waters in the country of Keralas), Mandagora (Bankor) and numerous others in the country of Damirike or Tamil land. The exports from India brought immense wealth to the country. According to Pliny, India, China and Arabia absorbed between them one hundred million sestorees per annum, calculated to represent, £. 1,100,000 of which nearly half came to India's share. This was a net gain to India and loss to the Roman exchequer. Roman coinage was the chief medium and it was freely accepted in the maritime trade relations, as well as in the overland silk trade between China and Rome passing through the outskirts of the Kushana empire in the North. The imitation of the Augustus type of Roman Aurie by Kujula Kadphises is a pointer in this direction.

The result of this intercourse with Rome was the interest taken by western geographers and historians, particularly the author of the 'Periplus of the Erythraean Sea', and Ptolemy. The commercial contacts were followed by political and cultural delegations on a reciprocal basis. The news of the accession of Augustus had reached India, and many states sent felicitations to him through their emissaries. One such ruler, according to Strabo, was Porus or Pandian. Scholars have identified him either with a Tamil king of Madura, or with Kujula Kadphises. Similarly, it is presumed by some scholars that the Romaka who attended the famous sacrifice performed by Yudhishthira was an emissary from Rome. Even though it may not be possible to rely on these sources, the contact between India and Rome on a political, cultural and commercial basis is fairly well-established, and southern India played

a more important part in bringing about this international understanding.

The Cave Temples of the Western Ghats

The Andhra-Satavahana rulers as well as foreign converts to Buddhism evinced keen interest in cutting out of solid rocks, beautiful Chaityas and monasteries in the sylvan hills of the Western ghats. They are an exhibition of the religious devotion and catholic outlook of the people and the rulers, and suggest the high water-mark of the artistic attainments of the Indian sculptor and carver. The ingenuity of the Indian mind in carving out big caves out of solid rocks, keeping in mind the symmetry of the carvings, so as to combine architectural elegance with sculptural harmony, stands unchallenged. The finds of hundreds of such caves within a radius of two hundred miles from Nasik suggest that the Indians had made themselves adept even in this field of artistic activity which culminated with the stupendous carving out of the famous Kailasa temple at Ellora in the eighth century A.D.

The contribution of southern India in Indian history is no less important. The Aryanisation of the South was a *fait accompli* by the fourth century B.C., and it became an equally important centre of Vedic culture and civilisation with sacrifices, handsome donations to the Brahmins, and a spirit of catholicity and broad vision. It added to the national wealth of the country through its resources for external trade, and ensured political and cultural unity. The credit for this is entirely due to the Andhra rulers who filled the vacuum in the political field. Now the historical pendulum again swings towards the north with the establishment of the Kushana empire.

CHAPTER X

FROM THE KUSHANAS TO THE GUPTAS

WITH the advent of the Kushanas in India, the process of assimilating foreigners in the Indian social scheme seems to have been complete. Earlier, the Greeks, Parthians and Sakas had followed suit. The Kushanas, in their turn, took no time to imbibe that spirit of catholicity and broad vision which has been from time immemorial the hall-mark of Indian culture. The very first ruler Kujula Kaphises bore the epithet *Satyadharmasthitasya,* or 'the exponent of true law,' while his son Wima Kadphises was a firm devotee of Siva, and the figuring of Siva and his Nandi on the coins of this ruler is a clear vindication of his religious outlook. Kanishka, possibly of another Kushana family, believed in eclecticism, as he chose divinities from Hindu, Buddhist, Greek and Iranian pantheons, and thus gave a concrete shape to the Rigvedic conception of *ekam-sad vipra bahudha vadanti*—"sages name variously that which is one." Huvishka, his son, followed in his footsteps. Vasudeva, the last ruler of the Imperial family, as his name suggests, became a devotee of Vishnu, though on his coins he depicted Siva alone. The Kushanas were completely assimilated.

The contributions of these foreigners—at one time a wandering tribe known as Yeu-chi from Western China—to Indian history is in no way meagre. Besides giving an exhibition of their firm devotion to Indian culture and religious outlook, the Kushana rulers were very helpful, even though indirectly, in the expansion of Indian culture outside India. Kanishka established political unity in Northern India, and his empire, according to a tradition preserved in the *Kalpanamanditika* of Kumaralata, extended as far as Khotan in Central Asia. The traffic between India and Central Asia became a normal feature. In the time of Huvishka, a certain lord of Badakshah came to Mathura, and set up an en-

dowment by depositing 550 Puranas in each of the two guilds of wheat flour and corn dealers, with the stipulation that out of the money accrued by way of interest a number of Brahmins were to be fed in the Punyasala of Huvishka. This is a clear evidence of Brahmanical influence in Central Asia. The expansion of Indian culture outside India was slow and by peaceful means, evoking little interest and emotion at home. The first three centuries of the Christian era are important for the expansion of Indian culture in Central Asia and South-East Asia; here at home the period witnessed the efflorescence of Indian religious art with its main centres at Gandhara, Mathura and Amaravati.

India Beyond the Himalayas

It has been rightly suggested by Sir Charles Eliot that the "spread of Indian thought was an intellectual conquest, not an exchange of ideas. On the north-west frontier there was some reciprocity, but otherwise the part played by India was consistently active and not receptive." There was neither any passion for discovery, nor fever of the conquest in the Indian mind. There were no Indian Tamerlanes to carry the message of Indian culture and thought in their schemes of conquest and subjugation, nor did the Indian emissaries seek political or commercial privileges for their motherland. It was the simple disinterested attitude of the Indian pioneers which won the confidence of the people in different lands.

To the north of the Himalayas, the Chinese Turkestan, called by Sir Aurel Stein, the "innermost heart of Asia forming a vast basin, about 1500 miles from east to west, and 600 miles from north to south, was at one time a prosperous country with its smiling cities rich with their sanctuaries and monasteries." The chance finds of manuscripts and antiquities displaying affinities to Gandhara art, and the finds at different sites, explored and excavated by European archaeologists, have established beyond doubt that a large body of Indians had migrated from the Punjab and settled in the basin of the Tarim, and built a number of cities. Indian life and thought was so firmly planted

that when Sir Aurel Stein was exploring that region he felt as if he was in some Punjab village though he was some two thousand miles away. The earliest dynasty of Indian kings of Khotan is named Vijaya, and, according to Stein, Buddhism was introduced in Khotan in the reign of king Vijaya Sambhava. Vairocana from Kashmir had gone there for this purpose, and many Buddhist monasteries were set up. The language used in the Khotan country was Prakrit, an admixture of Sanskrit, and the finds of manuscripts have revealed the common use of Indian language.

Besides Khotan, there were several other centres of Buddhist art and thought. Kashgar, Kish and Kucha later on became centres of Hinayanism, while Mahayanism flourished at Yarkand and Khotan. Central Asia at that time was also the meeting place of different cultures, as through it passed the famous overland route between China and Rome. The northern route touched Kucha, Karshar (ancient Agnidesa) and Turfan, while the southern route passed through Yarkand, Khotan, Miran and other centres. The two routes finally converged at Tun-huang on the western border of China which was a strong Buddhist centre noted for its famous grottoes. The Indian merchants, serving as intermediaries, tapped the silk trade at Bactria. Some of these centres had famous savants like Kumarajiva at Kucha, who was recognized as an encyclopaedia of Indian learning. From this place he had gone to China where he distinguished himself as a translator of many works. China was brought into intellectual touch with India, as a result of the efforts made by Buddhist scholars from the first century A.D. onwards, and Buddhism secured a firm place in the land of Confucius. India's relations with Chinese Turkestan continued to flourish till the eighth century A.D. The gradual advance of Islam, resulting in the devastation of Buddhist monasteries, and the suspension of the silk trade due to insecure conditions resulted in the break up of political and cultural ties between India and the "inner-most heart of Asia".

India Across the Seas

The expansion of Indian culture in the Far East followed a different course. Enterprising Indian merchants undertook perilous voyages in high seas long before the beginning of the Christian era. Very probably a movement of conquest and colonization bringing with it Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism seems to have started in the first century A.D. Hindu kingdoms were soon established in Kamboja, Champa, Java and Borneo. Tamralipti and Paloura on the eastern coast and Broach and Sopara on the western one seem to have been centres of emigration, though the possibility of several smaller ports being used by these sea-farers is not ruled out. There seem to have been successive waves of emigration from India, and they disembarked either at the Isthmus of Kra and then took the land route to Burma, Siam and Indo-China, or passed through the Malacca strait to the different islands of the East Indies, and further to the coast of Indo-China. Traditions preserve the accounts of Indian emigration at different places in the East. According to one preserved in the inscriptions, the Brahmana Kaundinya married Soma, the daughter of a Naga king, and from this union sprang the royal family of Fu-nan. A modified version about the foundation of the kingdom of Kambuja, is associated with a banished prince from Indraprastha. The foundation of Ligor in Malay Peninsula is also ascribed to a descendant of Asoka who fled from Magadha. Similarly, the island of Java was colonised by a prince of Hastinapura.

The beginnings of Indian Colonisation, according to several scholars, may be placed not later than the first century A.D. These small beginnings culminated in course of time in the setting up of vast empires of the Sailendras, and the Varman rulers of Kambuja. These were centres of Brahmanical culture and Buddhist thought and they were flourishing when India itself was engulfed in political disorder as a result of foreign invasions. The Indian cultural conquest of the Far East was not a temporary phase; it left its imprints which can still be traced in local cultures. Bali continues to be a Hindu island, while Borneo has the

proud distinction of its soil being sanctified by the performance of Vedic sacrifices and the setting up of the Yupas. The Boro Budur in Java and the Angkor Vat in Kambuja are late monuments but the seeds of Indian culture in those distant places were laid in the early centuries of the Christian era.

The Era of Artistic Efflorescence

During this period, foreign and Indian artists made immense contributions and they lent their services to all the religions. Gandhara art had its beginnings much earlier, probably in the first century B.C., but in the Kushana period the artistic activity certainly reached the highest watermark followed by the dusk of its decline, as there are no specimens of Gandhara art of the Gupta period. Mathura continued to flourish and probably received a fresh impetus as a result of the patronage extended by the Kushana rulers whose empire covered both the centres. The origin of the Buddha image may also be traced to this period, and probably both the schools evolved the human form of the Lord rather independently. As a result of the fourth Buddhist council patronised by Kanishka, a new wave of Mahayana Bhaktism swept over the Indian horizon, and the Hindus and the Jains were not inactive. Statues of Brahmanical gods and Jain Tirthankaras were freely made. The Amaravati school also owed much to Mathura, as it was a later production.

The Kushanas left an organised empire, but the period following, which we cannot call a Dark Age, was unimportant, as it was marked by the emergence of several small states and tribes. The ground was being prepared for some strong power which could integrate the smaller units and, once again, set up a strong empire bringing in its turn political unity and all round progress.

CHAPTER XI

THE AGE OF KALIDASA

"Wouldst thou the young years blossom,
and the fruit of its decline,
And all by which the soul is charmed,
enraptured, feasted, fed,
Wouldst thou the Earth and Heaven,
itself in one sole name combined,
I name thee, O Shakuntala and all
at once is said."

THESE lines represent the reaction of the German poet Goethe. He began to cut capers when he read Kalidasa's masterpiece *Shakuntalam* in mere translation. This most brilliant luminary in the literary firmament of the Gupta age is not only the greatest poet and dramatist, but through his works he is the best representative of his time which is supposed to be the golden age of Indian history. The general opinion seems to be that he lived at the court of Chandra Gupta II—also called Vikramaditya because of his conquest over the Sakas of Western India. Even though there is no decisive and definite proof for fixing his exact time, he must be placed after Asvaghosha—a contemporary of Kanishka—from whom he borrowed, and before 480, the date of the Mandasore inscription, of which some verses are borrowed from Kalidasa's works. He showed his literary genius in the spheres of drama and poetry.

The Gupta period represents a new phase characterised by a strong feeling of nationalism, establishment and consolidation of the empire, a sound administrative set-up to maintain it; the splendid output in the field of literature, the revival of religious movements, and an unparalleled outburst of artistic activity. This period is also accountable for another wave of Indian cultural expansion

of which the seeds were laid in the Kushana period, resulting in the foundation of Hindu kingdoms in the Far East. The atmosphere was surcharged with a strong feeling of religious toleration which helped in the growth and prosperity of all religious movements—Hindu, Buddhist and Jain. The age of Kalidasa, therefore, represents an era of material prosperity, religious understanding and considerable intellectual output.

Strong Nationalism and Consolidation

After nearly five hundred years of Indianised foreign rule, Northern India witnessed the birth of a strong nationalistic sentiment. The North-Western frontier and the Punjab were always a source of mental unrest to the people of Madhyadesa, who were not receptive to foreign rule—even though such rulers were Indianised and accorded a proper place in the Indian social scheme. When the last of these foreigners—the Hunas came, they were looked down upon with a feeling of suspicion, and could not be absorbed so easily. For nearly five hundred years the Hunas were not accorded a befitting place in Indian society, and a ninth century inscription from Kathiawar refers to the defeat of the Hunas as an event of national rejoicing. With the break-up of the Kushana empire, India relapsed into political chaos and intellectual torpor till the rise of the Guptas to power in Magadha. The intervening period is supposed by certain western scholars to be a dark period in Indian history, but now it has been possible to bridge up the big gap by placing the Kushanas, especially Kanishka and his family, in the second century A.D., rather than in the first.

With the establishment of the Gupta empire from a small beginning in Magadha, aided by the matrimonial alliance between the Gupta ruler Chandragupta I and the Licchavi princess, political unity was established once again in India as a whole. Samudragupta, the next ruler, proceeded on his Digvijaya, bringing within his influence and authority the rulers of Daksinapatha or the South, the border kingdoms of Assam, Nepal, Davaka and Kartaripur in Jullundur, and established relations with the Sakas,

the remnant of the Imperial Kushanas, and, above all, with Meghavarna of Ceylon. By destroying and rooting out the Naga Kingdoms and those of several others—Achyuta, Balavarman, Mahanandin etc. in the Aryavarta, he extended his empire as far as eastern Punjab and the borders of Assam, with his influence and authority recognised by the rulers of the South. After a lapse of nearly five hundred years, India witnessed the performance of two horse sacrifices—by Samudragupta in the North, and the Pallava ruler Siva Skandavarman in the South. Political unity was established in the country by this ruler; and it was a victory for the strong forces of nationalism. The semblance of foreign authority was eliminated, and this fact can be conceded even in the field of art, as is evident from the decline of the Gandhara school, and the rise and growth of the Mathura and Sarnath ones. The Sakas were weeded out by the third Imperial Gupta ruler Chandragupta II and the empire extended from sea to sea. The country passed through an era of peace and prosperity for a century when there was further disturbance as a result of the Huna menace and certain internal forces like the forest tribes of the Pushpamitras. These were curbed, but the Hunas eventually proved too strong a force, and after Skandagupta there was the beginning of the decline of the Gupta Empire. Within less than fifty years it collapsed though it lingered on in Magadha for some time more. The Gupta rule of nearly two centuries was an important landmark in the mental and material prosperity of India, and the integration of the small political forces.

Administrative set up

The Guptas inherited the administrative set up of the Kushana rulers with Kshatrapas or provincial heads, and there was a strong bureaucratic force recruited on merit. The names of such administrative brains like Virasena, Harisena—the panegyrist and foreign minister of Samudragupta, Sikharasvamin and Parnadatta are brought out by the records of that period. They were masterminds and distinguished themselves in every sphere of administrative activity. The last one in the list got the famous dam,

called the Sudarsana lake, repaired in his time as governor of Skandagupta. The administrative machinery was perfected by the Gupta rulers, and even local units were well organised with the mercantile and commercial interests represented in such bodies which looked after the day to day administration including the registration of documents and conveyancing. There is no reference to the espionage system of the Mauryan times. The Gupta rulers, very probably, were too popular and their virtues ensured adequate protection to their persons.

Religious Toleration

There was considerable activity in the sphere of religion. Many Puranas, as codes of human conduct and religious devotion, were written in this period, and the popular stories with particular reference to the Krishna cult had their lasting effect on the minds of the people. Some of the Gupta rulers were Vaishnavites while others alternated between Saivism and Devism, but all through this dynastic history, religious toleration was the hall mark of the time. It is wrong to infer that the Gupta period was characterised by the decay of Buddhism as a popular creed and a vigorous Hindu renaissance. On this point, there can be no better testimony than that of the Chinese pilgrim, Fa-Hien, who visited India between 405-411 A.D. He found Buddhism 'very flourishing' in the Punjab, in Bengal, too, near the mouth of the Hooghly, and there were twenty monasteries along the Jumna near Mathura and quite a few near the holy places. He does not give the slightest hint of the persecution of Buddhists. This fact, however, cannot be denied that Hinduism was a dominating force in that period, and religion as a whole was varied and vigorous.

Scientific Curiosity and Literary Efforts

The Gupta age ranks supreme for its scientific curiosity and literary efforts. The Hindu astronomers like Bhaskaracharya who propounded the theory of gravitation, Varahamihira, the great scientist, whose contributions embraced different fields of Scientific investigation, and

Charka and Susruta, the two famous writers on Medicine and Surgery, flourished in this period. The Scientific output of this age was immense and varied. There was a genuine thirst for investigation and scholars made every effort to satisfy it. This period is also notable in the field of classical Sanskrit. This language, which in the past had been undergoing changes, saw the fulfilment of the dream of Grammarians like Panini and Patanjali, and attained its classical form. It was the language of the elite, the scholarly world, while women and the uneducated expressed themselves in Prakrit, the language of the masses. This fact is evident from Sanskrit dramas. Kalidasa with his master pieces, *Shakuntalam* which has won the admiration of the whole world, and *Raghuvamsa* the greatest experiment in Kavya, dominated the literary field with his other matchless productions. In this age of Indian Pericles or of Shakespeare, as suggested by some scholars, Kalidasa does not stand alone. The myth about the nine jewels in the court of Vikramaditya seems to be a living reality, taking into consideration the large mass of literary output which can be definitely assigned to this period. Sudraka's *Mricchakatika* or 'the toy cart,' and Visakhadatta's *Mudrarakshasa* may be assigned to the later part of the Gupta age. The mass of religious literature included works of the Brahmins who brought out the present recensions of the famous epics and codified several Puranas, *Srimad Bhagavata,* Smritis like the *Manavadharma Sastra,* which have been the consolation of the devoted pious Hindus for ages. The period also saw the birth of the famous university of Nalanda. Its keel was laid in the later Gupta period but it reached the height of its glory in the time of Harsha with scholars coming from close and far-off quarters.

National Art

The Gupta artists found liberal patrons in the enlightened Gupta rulers. The Graeco-Buddhist art of Gandhara had faded, and the national school of art with its centres at Sarnath and Mathura attained a well-earned distinction, and produced beautiful pieces of sculptures,

which are thoroughly Indian in spirit. For the first time the Indian architects experimented with the building of lofty temple structures to satisfy the religious instincts of the people. The Bhitargaon (Kanpur dist) and Deogarh (Jhansi dist) temples are the best specimens of the temple architecture of this period. The Mehrauli pillar suggests that Indian craftsmen could well handle metals on a stupendous scale. The highest perfection in the sphere of art was reached in the famous Ajanta cave paintings where the Indian painters evinced their mastery with the brush and the paint on a canvas of granite rock.

It is difficult to assess the contribution of this period of Indian history and its master-minds within brief limits. Indian colonization in the Far East resulting in the setting up of Hindu kingdoms evolved a concrete form, though the seeds were sown in the Kushana period. As a result of extensive trade with the outside world and well developed lines of communication in the country itself, India became materially rich and prosperous; and the period of peace and prosperity resulted in literary and artistic efflorescence. The period on the whole rightly deserves the epithet 'the golden age of Indian history.'

CHAPTER XII

THE HARSHA ERA

HARSHA combined in himself the piety of Asoka and the valour of Samudragupta. The earlier part of his career was spent in consolidating the Kingdom of his father which was threatened by hostile forces, and had actually resulted in the murder of his brother and brother-in-law, and the banishment of his sister. The political situation was very grave when he ascended the throne in 606 A.D., but the strong personality and firm determination of the young ruler, still in his teens, steered him clear through this difficult situation, and he retrieved the fortunes of the Pushpabhuti family with his suzerainty extending over the five Indies in Northern India. The other part of his career was devoted to benevolent and charitable activity in which he distinguished himself. Deeply religious by temperament, Harsha was equally gifted with his pen as with his sword. He was an erudite scholar himself, the author of *Ratnavali, Priyadarshika* and *Nagananda,* and had gathered round him a band of scholars among whom Bana was his Boswell. The Harsha period is notable for several features—the struggle for empire, India's relations with Tibet, China and Iran, the quinquennial assemblies at Prayag, and the continuation of literary activity with the famous seat of learning at Nalanda.

The Struggle for Empire

The first few years of Harsha's life were devoted to his military compaigns in different directions resulting in the subjugation of the whole of Northern India from Assam to Kathiawar, and possibly his influence extended over Nepal. His attempt to cross the Vindhyas brought him face to face with the mighty ruler of the South, Pulakesin of the Chalukya family who, too, like him, had carved out a strong empire by defeating the neighbouring rulers. The challenge from the north was accepted, and, according to the Aihole

inscription of Pulakesin, Harsha lost the ground and he was content to maintain Narmada as the dividing line between the North and the South. Harsha had also kept out the Punjab, Sindh and Rajputana from the orbit of his political influence, even though for five years "the elephants never quitted their harness, nor the soldiers their armour". Harsha, thus, was successful in establishing political unity in Northern India which, however, did not outlive him, and after his death, the country once again was left in a state of political turmoil. Some foreign forces—Chinese and Tibetan—entered India, and took away Arjuna of Tirhut to China to punish him for his insolence in insulting a Chinese envoy.

India, Tibet and China

India and China were bound together with ties of cultural contacts for a very long time, at least from the first century A.D. with the establishment of Buddhism in China. Interest in India and her rich and varied culture grew among the Chinese. The erudite scholars having a genuine thirst for knowledge were anxious to drink deep and to their hearts content the nectar of Indian learning. Several Indian scholars had visited China, and the traffic in the other direction, too, was not slow. Fa-hien had come to India in the time of Chandragupta II, early in the fourth century A. D. and Hiuen Tsang followed suit in the time of Harsha. The fame of Nalanda—the seat of learning—had attracted this Chinese pilgrim who, like so many foreigners, spent a couple of years at this academic centre. He enjoyed the hospitality of both Harsha and Pulakesin and has presented a vivid and first hand picture of India of his time. He has testified to the upright and honourable character of the people. The Chinese pilgrim was the special invitee to a religious assembly arranged in his honour at Kanauj, and he also watched the grand assemblage at Prayag which was a periodical feature.

Tibet remained a land of mystery for a long time. In the last quarter of the sixth century A.D. a chief named Srong-tsan formed a strong Kingdom by unifying the scattered tribes. His son Sron-tson gam-po, the greatest

ruler of Tibet, was a contemporary of Harsha. His marriage with a Nepalese princess, the daughter of Ansuvarman, and a Chinese princess, was a turning point in his career. They converted the emperor to Buddhism, and this event facilitated the entry of Buddhism into Tibet. This ruler evinced keen interest in Indian language, thought and even politics. He sent a Tibetan mission headed by Sambhota to Kashmir, and the Brahmi script was introduced in the land of the white snow three years after his return to Tibet. From seventh century onwards, a number of Indian pandits were invited to Tibet including the Tantric Padmasambhava from Nalanda towards A.D. 749, and the famous Atisa, the greatest scholar of his age, the abbot of the university of Vikramasila in the eleventh century A.D. The introduction of Buddhism in Tibet and the continued influx of Indian scholars, especially from Bengal, was responsible for Indian artistic influence on Tibetan art—especially noted for the silken scrolls depicting the life of the Master. India's relations with Tibet commencing in the Harsha era remained close and cordial. While India took Tibet out of oblivion, Buddhism found a safe refuge there when the land of its origin was engulfed in political and socio-religious turmoils.

The Assemblies at Prayag

The assemblies at Prayag had not so much of a religious significance, as of charitable and humane considerations which prompted the emperor to part with his surplus, accumulated in the royal treasury in five years time. "All being given away", says the Chinese pilgrim, "he begged from his sister an ordinary second-hand garment, and having put it on, he paid worship to the Buddhas of the ten regions", and rejoiced that his treasure had been bestowed in the field of religious merit. Personally a Buddhist, Harsha did not relinquish his respect for the religion of his birth to which he was firmly devoted. and showed due honour to Siva and Vishnu, besides feeding five hundred Brahmins every day.

The University of Nalanda

The keel for this academic centre was laid in the later Gupta period, but in the time of Harsha this centre of learning gained fame and attracted scholars from different parts of Asia. Though primarily a Buddhist centre, it was noted for its universal outlook, a broad field of studies including both Brahmanical and Buddhist subjects, and a clear vision with a keen sense of appreciating academic values. With ten thousand scholars on its rolls, the University under Silabhadra as the abbot, enjoyed universal patronage, and dedications to keep this institution running were always forthcoming. This high seat of learning continued to prosper for a number of centuries, and diffused knowledge on a grand scale, till it met its end in the twelfth century. The excavations, which have brought to light the vast university campus, still remind the visitor of the glory and fame it attained in the whole of Asia.

Literary Output

The Harsha era is also notable for literary contributions. A gifted scholar himself, the king had gathered in his court savants like Bana, Mayura, Haradatta and Jayasena who were the greatest writers of the day. It is wrong to suppose that with the break up of the Gupta empire, there was intellectual torpor. Actually, the sixth century A.D. witnessed the emergence of great Sanskrit scholars like Bharavi, Kumaradasa and Dandin; and in the period following there was no intellectual stagnation. Contributions were forthcoming in the fields of literature, philosophy and even of science and religion. It was really an era of pursuit of learning in which scholars seem to have joined on an international plane.

The Harsha age is also noted for the material prosperity of the country. With a number of prosperous cities and kingdoms visited by the Chinese pilgrim himself, Indian culture was centred in city life, with the artistic tastes of the people well-exhibited. Harsha's death left Northern India without a ruler, and once again the political unity was shaken with the emergence of new forces.

CHAPTER XIII

THE AGE OF BHOJA AND MAHENDRAPALA

WITH the death of Harsha in 647 A.D., the political scene in Northern India was blurred for some time, and a period of disintegration followed. Though Yasovarman was a strong ruler of his time, yet after him in the first half of the eighth century A.D. Kanauj became the hot bed of rivalry amongst the three great powers—the Gurjaras, originally from Rajputana, and not a foreign tribe as was presumed by some scholars, the Palas from Bengal, assisted by the Rashtrakutas from the south, who were equally friendly with the Muslims of Sindh. The tripartite struggle for supremacy in the north ultimately resulted in the victory of the Gurjara-Pratiharas with their empire extending as far as Gujarat and Kathiawar in the west and the borders of Bengal in the east. The Rashtrakutas were a formidable force in the south, and there were several occasions for the show of arms, with the Rashtrakutas having a slight advantage over their adversary, but they were not strong enough to establish any empire in the north. It is strange that despite several attempts, the Arabs lay entrenched in Sindh and Multan for full five centuries. It seems that the policy of pushing Islam through sword had completely failed in India. With the defeat of the forces of Islam by Avanijanasraya at Nausari in the Bombay state, and by Nagabhata in the north, the danger from the west was shelved, and India breathed an air of relief and satisfaction. The period from the eighth to the eleventh century A.D. is one of national solidarity and integration of the disjointed units resulting in the foundation of an empire which in size and strength was in no way inferior to that of Harsha or even of Samudragupta, leaving aside his feudatories. We propose considering some of the important political and socio-religious forces that were active in that span of over three hundred years.

National Awakening

The establishment of the Arab kingdom in Sindh in 711 A.D. had added another factor to the ever growing rivalry for political supremacy in Northern India. The Arabs believed in the policy of expansion and they made a two-pronged attack. In the south-west they were actually successful in penetrating deep, overrunning the kingdoms of Saindhava, Surashtra, Cavotaka, Mayura and Gurjara kings. The Arab invasion covered Kathiawar, Cutch, Surashtra and Broach, and finally the forces of Junaid, the general of Khalifa Hisham (724-743 A.D.) reached the borders of the Chalukyan kingdom where they were repulsed by the army of Avanijanasraya Pulakesiraja. In the north, too, the Arabs diverted their forces towards Ujjain and Malwa. They were at first successful but ultimately Nagabhata defeated them and in the days of Tamin, the Muslims retired from several parts of India. When this tide of Arab threat, which had flooded the central and south western Peninsula and completely submerged the smaller states had receded, two strong powers emerged —the Chalukyas in the south-west and the Gurjara-Pratiharas in the north. In this period of national awakening as a result of the impending foreign danger, the integration of the smaller states soon followed. In the Deccan the Chalukyas were replaced very soon by the Rashtrakutas, and in the north, there was at first a trial of strength between the Gurjara-Pratiharas and the Palas, and ultimately the former dominated the political scene for over two centuries. The Arab threat was thus helpful in creating national consciousness, followed by the integration of states, and the building up of a vast empire, as a result of the conquests undertaken by Emperor Bhoja, and ably preserved by his son Mahendrapala.

Social Regeneration

A new and more vigorous tone saturated the atmosphere in that period. It seems to have been an era of awakening and social regeneration. The conversion of the Indian masses had created a problem. The Hindu social structure was threatened, and its ranks started thinning

due to the carrying away of Hindu men and women as slaves, and society stood on its trial. It had to take preventive measures to safeguard the interests of its members and reclaim those who were forcibly converted to Islam. The rigidity of the caste system on the one hand, and the reclamation of the members lost on the other had to be co-ordinated, and a new line of action was to be taken. This problem was solved by a certain Rishi named Devala who formulated his social injunctions on the banks of the Sindhu, when a deputation of people waited upon him, and these are embodied in his short composition not exceeding ninety verses known as *Devala Smriti.* It opens with a question put by the deputation to Devala as to how Brahmanas and members of other varnas, when carried away by the Arabs—called Mlechhas, could be purified and restored to their castes. Devala suggests their reclamation after the performance of purificatory rites, and advises the reclamation of even those ladies who had conceived. The foetus in the women's womb, according to the Rishi, is like a thorn in the body, and when this foreign substance is removed and she has had her courses, she becomes pure as gold. This social phenomenon is also confirmed from the Arabic sources. Both Biladuri and Al-Beruni mention that attempts were made to reclaim those lost to the alien faith. While Hakim was the governor, writes Biladuri, the people of Al-Hind apostatized and returned to idolatry. Al-Beruni also refers to the return of Hindu slaves to their country and their reclamation after purificatory rites. These facts make it absolutely clear that the forces of Islam did not succeed in India by adopting a bold and expansionist policy, and the pace of its progress was retarded due to several reasons—a strong socio-religious consciousness and political unity in the country.

Life as Depicted in Rajasekhara's Works

Rajasekhara, who enjoyed the patronage of Mahendrapala and his son Mahipala, is the best representative of his time, and his works—*Karpuramanjari, Kavyamimamsa, Balaramayana, Balabharata* and *Viddhasalabhanjika* throw a flood of light on the contemporary life of the people.

Corroboration is available from other sources as well. His two dramas give an insight into the life of the royal seraglio, but there is little evidence to suggest that the ladies were denied freedom of movement and opportunities for the display of talents. The poet's wife Avantisundari was a talented Kshatriya lady. He also refers to ladies, dancing, singing and playing on musical instruments, and of some who were very good painters, whose productions could very well be matched with those of others. Some of the heroines in his dramas composed poems, a fact also supported by his *Kavyamimamsa*. According to Sulaiman, a contemporary Arab writer, most of the princes of India when they held a court, allowed their women to be seen by men who attended, whether they be natives or foreigners. No veil concealed them from the eye of the visitors. Rajasekhara also describes the *nepathya*—costume—of ladies in the east, north, west and south, in accordance with natural surroundings, customs and manners. He has also referred to their using cosmetics, and arranging the hair in different ways. He rightly suggests that even unattractive ladies appear charming through embellishments, but those with natural grace looked more beautiful with their ornaments and make-up. It is a pity that the poet has not referred to the famous seat of learning at Nalanda, though a solitary record of Mahendrapala, his patron, has been recovered from that place. Rajasekhara takes particular interest in learned assemblies convened by the kings in their courts. There were several academic centres, and Bhinmal in Rajputana was noted for astronomical studies, where *Brahma Siddhanta* was composed. The contemporary sources, especially inscriptions, throw much light on the economic and religious life in that period.

The economic life was complicated, with varied professions, and people, who were prosperous, created numerous endowments. Vaishnavism and Saivism flourished, but popular religious beliefs were gaining strength. In the *Karpuramanjari* there are references to the Kaulas and the supernatural powers possessed by Bhairavanath. These Kaulas combined pleasure with salvation, religion with in-

dulgence in wine and women, and repute for piety with most unrestricted sensuality. This tendency had also crept into Tantric Buddhism with the five *makaras*—*matsya, madira, mansa, maithuna* and *mudra,* with the result that there was only a thin edge of distinction between Brahmanical and Buddhistic schools of this type. This factor was to a considerable extent responsible for the decline and gradual eclipse of Buddhism from the land of its birth.

The Gurjara-Pratihara period of Indian history is very important for bringing political stability to the country, which endured for a considerable period. It was only after the death of Mahendrapala, that the process of disintegration gradually set in, with the war of succession, weak rulers, want of foresight and lack of diplomacy and, above all, the steady growth of the adversaries. The vast empire which extended from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian sea was gradually reduced. The final blow was dealt by Mahmud of Ghazni, but, after his return, the last ruler Yashapala was on the throne in 1031 A.D. It is not known how and when he met his end, but one thing is certain. The dust raised by the razing of this last Hindu empire took some time to settle down before the foundations of the famous Gahadavalas could be laid on its ruins at Kanauj.

CHAPTER XIV

SOUTHERN INDIA AGAIN

SOUTHERN INDIA of the early Mediaeval period is notable for its varied contributions to Indian history. The establishment of political unity, successful completion of the Aryanisation process, Siva-Vishnu cults and their synthesis, the rising naval strength of the Southern powers, reception to the foreign religions, and the grand artistic productions of Ellora, Mamallapuram and other places, are some of the important features of the South Indian history of this period. The veil of secrecy no longer hangs on its person, and there is no need of a Chandragupta Maurya or a Samudragupta from the north to lift it out of oblivion. The affairs in the south cease to be mysterious to the north. nor does it remain in back-waters. The tables seem to have been turned, and the kings of Southern India, known as Karnataka, evince keen interest in the political affairs of the north. Some of the South Indian rulers added the emblem of the Ganga and the Yamuna to their imperial insignia. Dhruva or Dhora, Govinda III, Amoghavarsha and Indra III among the Rashtrakutas carried their arms to the north, and the last one, passing through Ujjain, is said to have devastated the city of Kanauj. The Pratihara-Rashtrakuta rivalry assumed a proverbial fame. Rajendra I Gangaikonda in the first half of the eleventh century A.D., advanced as far as the Ganges and defeated the Pala ruler Mahipala and several others. The scores were not paid back. It appears that Southern India was rising in the political horizon due to the establishment of strong powers. Here we propose considering these political and cultural forces that were active in that period in Southern India.

The Karnataka Period

It was suggested by M. H. Krishna that a good part of the early Mediaeval period, or what he calls Later Ancient India, connected with the Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas and

their immediate successors may well be termed 'the Karnataka period' of Indian history with as much truth as the term Maratha period can be applied to the eighteenth century. Its length of life extending over six centuries, its contributions to learning and art, and its spectacular military achievements and administrative efficiency win for it the foremost place in that period. The Pallavas with their capital at Kanchi—a seat of Sanskrit learning—and their empire extending upto Krishna in the north, and to the outskirts of Madura of the Pandyas in the south, were a strong contestant for supremacy in Southern India. This empire attained its supremacy under Narasimhavarman, also called Mammala, who defeated Pulakesin II and occupied his capital. The Chalukyas in their turn under Vikramaditya II temporarily occupied the Pallava capital in 740 A.D. The Rashtrakutas finally stepped in the field of rivalry with Krishna of this family destroying the Pallavas of the South in the second half of the ninth century A.D. The Eastern Chalukyas ruling at Vengi continued to raise the banner of their sovereignty in the mid-eastern region, and a trial of strength between the two became inevitable, but with indecisive results.

By the end of the tenth century, the Rashtrakuta dynasty became extinct, and with the success of the Western Chalukya Taila II a new dynasty ruled over the Kanarese districts. In the extreme south there was a struggle between the Pandyas and the Singhalese monarchs, ultimately paving the way for the Cholas who also invaded Ceylon under Rajaraja I (A.D. 985-1012). There was constant war between the Tamils and the Singhalese for a century and a half till the time of Parakramabahu who consolidated the kingdom of Ceylon. The eleventh century had changed the political complexion of the South. The Western Chalukyas were ruling the Deccan from the western sea to the Eastern Chalukyan frontier. The Pallavas were crushed and the Cholas had rapidly risen to be a great power. The Pandyas were of little account, while the Rashtrakutas had completely disappeared. Despite these political changes affecting the balance of power in the South, two

factors are notable—firstly, the unity in diversity, and secondly, the complete Aryanisation of the South with an unceasing flow of literary and artistic movements.

Aryanisation of the South

The large number of inscriptions of the Pallavas in Prakrit—the language of the masses—followed later on in Sanskrit, of which these rulers were great patrons, indubitably suggest that the process of Aryanisation of the South was complete. The university of Kanchi had talented Sanskrit scholars, and it is suggested that Dandin, and Bharavi, the authors of *Dasakumaracharita* and *Kiratarjuniyam* respectively belonged to the South. The ritual of Vedic sacrifices was not an unusual thing. We find the Rashtrakuta ruler performing the Hiranyagarbha ceremony at Ujjain where he was waited upon by several kings. The neo-Brahmanism of the North was well settled in the South, manifesting and making its presence strongly felt with a diffusion of Brahmanical culture and thought in different spheres, whether it be the strong Saiva or Vishnu cult, or the theistic philosophy of the Mimamsa school, or the *advaita* or non-dualist philosophy of Sankara—the best representative of the Brahmin intelligentsia, Aryanisation of the South was complete, and, with the establishment of the four pithas by Sankara, religious unity of the country was established. The North and the South became repositories of the same old Aryan culture.

The Indian spirit of catholicity and broad outlook was also manifest in Southern India, where, besides Pauranic Hinduism stressed by devotion to Vishnu and Siva with their different names and forms, also prospered Buddhists and Jains. Kanchi was a strong centre of Sanskrit learning and Brahmanical culture, and, according to the testimony of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-tsang, it had also some hundreds of Sangharamas with ten thousand Buddhist priests. Even in the time of the Cholas, there are inscriptions recording dedications to the Buddhist viharas by Saiva kings like Rajaraja Chola and Kulottunga I. The Jains were also honoured, and the Rashtrakuta kings like Amoghavarsha I, Indra IV and others, as well as the West-

ern Ganga kings were their supporters. The famous image of Gomatesvara was erected at Sravana Belgola in 983 A.D. by Camundaraya, the minister of Rajamalla. Jainism flourished under the Pallava and Pandya rulers, but it was warmly patronised by the Chalukya ruler Kumarapala who was inspired by Hemacandra. A spirit of toleration and concord among the various sects, with a good deal of mutual understanding, was particularly noticeable. Islam in its early stages was well received in Malabar and continued to retain its peaceful existence while the Parsis found a safe refuge at Sanjan in the Thana district after facing religious persecution in Iran.

Kailasa and Mamallapuram Rathas

The records of the religious movements in the South are well preserved both in Sanskrit and Vernacular literatures, but the famous temples are living memorials of the great rulers who evinced keen interest in these artistic activities. Kailasa was built by the Rashtrakuta ruler Krishna I, while the great Pallava ruler Narasimha and his successors got the wonderful Rathas carved out of granite rocks at Mamallapuram. These temples and several others had both religious and civic significance, and were repositories of learning as well. The Kailasa, a unique experiment in rock-cut architecture, is a concrete illustration of that feeling of firm devotion to the Lord, and may be considered as a great spiritual achievement. It is notable for its bold designs and excellent carvings and subjects like Ravana shaking the Kailasa, or Śiva in his *Tandavanritya* are some of the masterpieces of that age. The famous *rathas*, popularly called seven Pagodas, at Mamallapuram are free standing sculptural replicas of contemporary structural buildings carved from the granite rocks on the shore. These monolithic temples, sculptured in the shape of chariots, are very natural, with intense artistic value. They are also significant and important for the later development of Dravidian architecture. From the seventh to the eleventh century A.D., art in South India is intensely creative, with productions which may be lacking in coher-

ence and unity, but are not wanting in sincere exhibition of religious devotion.

Southern India of the early Mediaeval period had its importance, rather great, in Indian history. The rising naval strength enabled the great powers to extend their conquest overseas. Expeditions were undertaken—of which there are several references—even across the Bay of Bengal. Rajendra I Gangaikonda, who is notable for his expedition in the North, vanquished Sangramavijayottungavarman and conquered Kadaram in the Malaya Peninsula. There are references to the Cola—Śailendra naval clashes which had become a perpetual feature in that period. The output of this period in other fields is in no way meagre. Before the storm of Muslim conquest under Malik Kafur broke, there were stronger and illuminating lights in the Hindu firmament. It seems that religion and science had blended together. While Ramanuja with his Vaishnava philosophy of love and devotion was attracting the masses, Bhaskaracharya, the Indian Newton, was solving many problems of natural sciences which puzzled the Europeans even a few centuries later.

CHAPTER XV

TOWARDS ANGKOR AND BOROBUDUR

THE colossal ruins in Indo-China covering a period of nearly a millenium and extending over numerous sites including the successive capitals of Yasodharpura, Angkor-Vat and Angkor Thom, represent the lost vestiges of once flourishing Hindu states in the Far East. These temples, which lay engulfed beneath the branches and roots of trees whose claws had driven firm into the mortarless joints, were practically sucked and exhausted by the octopus of nature. The victim was snatched from the clutches of annihilation, and new blood was infused by the archaeologists. The restoration of these temples was not a kind of crazy game of skittles or a basket of bottles, as supposed by Paul Claudel, but they inspired awe and terror in the mind of the visitor. "When I saw the Angkor vat", writes Lestock, "I just sat down, and gazed for a fortnight, and the more I gazed the more I was impressed, frightened even, who but the gods could have built such a magnificent structure." The Angkor in Indo-China and Borobudur in Java represent two different phases of Indian artistic activity, and they symbolise the highest spiritual achievement of the people. The former is noted for its Brahmanical character, while the latter is a Buddhist stupa of an unprecedented type. It is difficult to fix the date of its construction, but the city of Angkor Vat was built by Suryavarman II (1112-52), and Angkor Thom became the centre of architectural achievement in the time of Jayavarman VII (1181-1201 A.D.).

The Khmer Phase

This phase of Indian artistic activity in the Far East is best represented by Angkor Vat and Angkor Thom and several other monuments in Cambodia. The entrance to the Angkor Vat is through a causeway with balustrades in the shape of giant nagas laid on either side. The sanctuary

with a monumental portal stands on an elevated platform more than three thousand feet on either side. The portice leads to a vast gallery more than half a mile in circumference, and decorated with reliefs connected with Vishnu and the Yamalokas. The Central tower which contained the image of the Devaraja rises two hundred feet above the ground level. This temple marks the culmination of architectural refinements. During the time of Jayavarman VII, Angkor Thom became the centre of architectural development. This new capital, like the Vatican city, was reserved for temples and palaces of kings and other dignitaries. The gem of Khmer architecture is Bantey Srei (12 miles north-east of the Angkor group). The plan is the usual crucified one and the entire precinct is surrounded by an enclosure with *gopurams*. The individual towers are ornamented with false doorways. The portals are crowned with lintels and a massive typanum repeated at every successive level of the superstructure.

The Khmer sculptures completely dominate the architecture itself. These are based on Indian motifs and the subjects are derived from the Indian Epics and the Puranas. The influence of the Gupta art is perceptible in Khmer sculptures with the same gentle posture and transparent drapery. The Indian immigrants had brought with them ideas and chisels, and the expert hands lost no time in assimilating them. The later art represented the blending of the Indian and indigenous traditions, and the former was submerged in the latter, though the subject remained Indian.

India and Cambodia

The earlier reference to an Indian mission in Fu-nan, and a return visit to India is noticed in a Chinese work San-Ku-che written towards the end of the third century A.D. The fuller account of this mission is preserved in the account of Kang Tai, the Chinese Megasthenes. With the election of the Brahmin Kaundinya, as king of Fu-nan, Hindu life and thought were introduced in Indo-China. The Kambuja inscriptions unmistakably point to the influence of Indian culture in that country. The fusion of

the Hindu and the native cultures resulted in a sort of synthesis in which the matriarchal element of the latter was assimilated in the Brahmanical supremacy of the former. There are references to several Brahmin immigrants from India marrying in the Royal family. Agastya married a princess named Hiranyavati, and Brahmin Divakara married Indralakshmi, daughter of king Rajendravarman. The Brahmins enjoyed a position of advantage and their hierarchy was recognized. In the time of Suryavarman, there was a division of society into castes and Sivacharya was accorded the highest place.

The Indian influence is also perceptible in the economic field. Some of the professions were organized into guilds like those in India, and among the professions even that of betal sellers (tambulika) was a flourishing one. Indian weights and measures like *Prastha, Kharika, Drona, Ghati, Pana* and *Tula* were in common use. The Indian settlers were conscious of developing the national wealth of the country. According to the history of the Liang dynasty, (502-533) A.D., merchants from India and Parthia came to this country in large numbers, while another Chinese text refers to exchange of diamonds, sandals and other goods between India and Fu-nan. Most of the trade was done by sea but land route was also in use for a long time. The stamp of Indian culture lay in the spheres of education as well as religion. The inscriptions mention names of several talented scholars who were well up in Vedic and grammatical studies. King Yasovarman was a talented ruler, and he himself had composed a commentary on Patanjali's *Mahabhashya.* Sivasoma, guru of king Indravarman, had studied sastras at the feet of Sankara, thereby suggesting that scholars from Indo-China came to India as well. The contact with the homeland was a stimulating factor. The records also exhibit the characteristics of the Gauda style. In the sphere of religion both Saivism and Vaishnavism prospered there, and the cult of the Devaraja was a synthesis of Saivism with ancestor worship. Even Tantrism was accepted and Hiranyadama especially went from India to teach Tantric texts.

India's contact with Cambodia remained a vital feature and its influence was perceptible in all the fields. India gave inspiration to this country by providing men and ideals which were heartily welcomed and assimilated. The country in return preserved Indian culture at a time when India itself was passing through political vicissitudes.

India and Java

The first Hindu kingdom in Java was established by the year 132 A.D. and king Devavarman sent an embassy to China in that year. A few inscriptions from Koti (Kutei), recorded on stone pillars, commemorate the rich donations and sacrifices of king Mulavarman. These records are dated about A.D. 400. Fa-hien also arrived here on his way to China, and he has recorded his impressions. Another Hindu kingdom was that of Purnavarman in western Java. His inscriptions are in south Indian characters. The relations of the Hindu kingdoms of Java with southern India are also brought out by two inscriptions of the eighth century A.D. from Changal and Dinaya. The greatest Indian rulers here were the Sailendras whose empire extended as far as the Malay Peninsula. One Sailendra ruler Balaputradeva created an endowment through the Pala ruler Devapala at Nalanda in A.D. 850. The Indian influence in Java is also perceptible in art. Scenes from the Indian Epic Ramayana are carved in the Javanese temple at Prambanan of the eighth century A.D., and also at Panataran in Eastern Java. The opening scene of the Rama story at Prambanan agrees in a remarkable way with the corresponding verse in the Raghuvamsa of Kalidasa. The Mahabharata too was known. The Epic heroes still form the subjects of Shadow-Shows popularly known as Wayang in Java.

Buddhism and Borobudur

The history of Buddhism in Java is associated with the story of Gunavarman of Kipin who refused the throne and went to Ceylon and Java from where he went in a vessel owned by the merchant Nandin to China in A.D. 431. The Chinese pilgrim, Itsing found Buddhism in a very

flourishing condition. The stupa of Borobudur is the greatest living example of the prosperous state of Buddhism in Java. Its origin and history are shrouded in mystery, but, for its height of artistic inspiration and skilful execution, it is placed on a par with the famous shrine of Akropolis. This complicated edifice rising in a number of terraces and crowned with a cluster of perforated dagobas, unlike the stupas in India, is noted for its architectural decoration. It is not only its vastness but its spirit of supreme repose and calmness that attracts the visitor. The total number of sculptured panels decorating the walls and balustrades along the four galleries number no less than 1300. Besides this greatest surviving monument of Indian Mahayana Buddhism, remains of Hindu temples have also been found in Java.

The other Hindu States in the Far East include Sri Vijaya in Sumatra which had great political, commercial and academic importance. The remains of Indian culture are traceable in the mainland at Malaya and in the distant islands of Borneo and Celebes, as well as in Annam which had a mighty Hindu state called Champa. The advent of Islam affected the Hindu-Buddhist rule in Java and at other places where it was carried by the Arab merchants and propagated in a peaceful manner. The conversion of some of the members of the royal families marked the beginning of the decline of these powers. In Indo-China the Islamic influence was not at all perceptible. It was the French Colonial power which took over these states. After a couple of centuries of colonial rule, these countries now breathe in a free atmosphere again. Traces of foreign colonial rule are extinct, but the vestiges of Indian culture in ancient monuments are living reminiscences of that glorious period of Indian history in these states.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CRESCENT IN INDIA

THE ADVENT of Islam in India in 711 A.D., was only a partial fulfilment of the expansionist policy adopted by the followers of the Prophet to carry his message to the remotest corner and bring the infidels into the orbit of Pan Islamism. While Gothic Spain was shattered in 710 and the standards of Islam were carried from Samarkand to Kashghar, the Indus valley was attacked at the same time by an ambitious high spirited youth, still in his teens, at the command of a picked up force of six thousand horsemen and an equal number of camels. The first Arab victory at Dabul and another at Brahmanabad opened the road to Multan which too was taken. Mohammad bin Qasim adopted a policy of toleration which had a soothing effect on the population but his recall by the Caliph turned the conquest of Sindh into a mere episode in Indian history, and the Arab triumph achieved little results. After Qasim's expedition, there were no further reinforcements, and the Arabs were left insecure. The settlers formed independent kingdoms at Multan and at the new city of Mansura, but beyond that the Arab kingdom never expanded though several attempts were made by Junaid, the general of Khalifa Hisham.

During the long period of five hundred years, Islam as a political force remained a non-entity. Causes responsible for it can be accounted for. The Arab conquest led to nothing and it scarcely left a vestige except the ruins of the ancient buildings and names of certain Arab families. But Islam as a religion peacefully prospered in western and southern India, a fact which is supported by the testimony of the Arab geographers. It had a special place in the South. Its advent in India infused a new tone and it shook the Hindu socio-religious structure out of the slough of intellectual stagnation and moral torpor into which it

had fallen. As such, Islam in India was a welcome force. The Indo-Islamic synthesis ultimately took place and it is manifest in the fields of mystic religion, art and language. A clear study of the situation arising out of the coming of Islam in India is called for here, and we might consider these important factors at length.

Islam as a Political Force

It is a pity that the task of carrying the message of Islam was in unreliable hands who, like a cloud of locusts, devoured the rich and fertile plains of India, leaving them barren and desolate, but with their greed remaining unsatisfied. They were not well-grounded in Islamic faith. Even after the establishment of the first Islamic empire, the savage impulses and barbaric traits were not forgotten and, as Vincent Smith suggests, "the blood-stained annals of the sultanate of Delhi are not pleasant reading". This attitude of the Mohammadans right from the time of Junaid onwards created a strong Hindu opposition which impeded the political expansion of Islamic power in India. The emergence of the strong Pratihara empire at Kanauj, with its boundaries extending as far as Kathiawar in the west and Bengal in the east, was a great set-back to the Arabs in Sindh and Multan, and Baura—possibly a mistake for Bhoja—was the greatest enemy of Islam in India.

The Musalman invaders from the Ghaznis onwards were interested either in Indian treasures, or in conquest and civil strife, and they were completely oblivious of the fact that Islam meant not merely political conquest but also proselytisation and converting the people of India to the religion of the Prophet. For this they were not prepared. The result was obvious. Islam, as a political force, failed to gain a footing in Northern India for a very long time, and it was equally unsuccessful in recruiting new converts to its social fold.

Islam as a Religion

Scholars have not drawn any thin-edged distinction between the progress of Islam as a political power and Islam as a discipline of life with its firm faith in one God, well-

defined rule of conduct, and communal brotherhood. This conception of monotheism and classless society should have been acceptable to the masses in general which at that time needed a religious stimulus, but the Muslims failed, despite their rule in India for a number of centuries, to change the pattern of Hindu social structure on Islamic ideals. There was, however, appreciation of this new religious outlook which manifested itself. Islam steadily progressed both in western and southern India. According to some traditional accounts, the last of the Cheraman Perumal kings of Malabar became a convert to the new religion, and afterwards left for Arabia where he died four years later. He instructed his government to receive and respect the Muslims in his dominions. As a result of this, mosques were erected at several places on the Malabar coast. This might be a legendary account only, but it is quite likely that this dynasty came to an end with this converted ruler.

Islam, however, attained recognition in Malabar and at other places in the south. The Rashtrakuta rulers were also well disposed towards the Muslims and their religion, and in that state many mosques were also noticeable. In western India as well, Dabul, Somnath, Broach, Chaul and other places had small Muslim settlements. The Arab geographers Sulaiman, Masudi, Ibn Hakul and Abu Zaid, have all a word of praise for Balhara, the Valabhi ruler who was very friendly towards Islam and its followers. The Arab merchants and others engaged themselves in carrying the message of the Prophet in a peaceful manner, and they were also successful. The Muslim merchants were well protected by the Hindu rulers, as we notice in the case of Siddharaja punishing the Hindu aggressors at Cambay.

The Synthesis

As a result of the contact between the new force of Islam and old Hinduism, there was some sort of synthesis in the sphere of religion, art and language. It is suggested by Prof. Humayun Kabir, that the *advaitavada* of Sankara's philosophy might have been the outcome of Islamic monotheism. The philosophy of Sankara is cer-

tainly derived from the old Upanishadic sources, but the temper and shape of synthesis achieved suggest the operation of some novel element. In the artistic field the Hindu artificers happily co-operated in the grand designs of the Sultanate Emperors. In the great mosque of Qutubuddin are combined the columns of the Hindu style with the Muslim cloister. The Hindu and Islamic artistic features are blended in other centres as well. In Southern India, as pointed out by some scholars, the Hindu philosophy and religion attempted to discover the common elements and analogies in the philosophical ideas, dogma and ritual of Islam. The Hindu and Muslim saints of Southern India have left behind them poetical compositions in the Tamil language. As a result of the synthesis between the two streams of religious thought emerged what is known as the Hindustani way in language and culture.

CHAPTER XVII

THE INDIAN REFORMATION

THE Indian Reformation movement is a long drawn out process without reference to any specific time or space. A period of stagnation is always followed by the advent of something like a superman bringing with him a new ideology or reviving old but long forgotten ideals, and setting them into motion with his virile, dynamic and magnetic personality and strong character. The hungry humanity gradually swallows the spiritual food provided by this superman through his erudition. The pace of this concentrated and incessant activity for the moral uplift of the masses is gradually slackened, with the beginning of its decline, and an era of retrogression follows. There is again a vacuum to be filled in, and the coming of another superman is eagerly awaited. Thus proceeds this cycle of spiritual and moral life of the people in general.

Indian history is a record of several such periods when the era of stagnation is followed by intense religious activity. One such period begins with Sankara in the eighth century A.D. followed by Ramanuja, Ramananda, Chaitanya, Kabir and others who illuminated the spiritual firmament and gave a new vision to the masses to let them perceive the self, the Brahman and the supreme and ultimate spirit in true colour and form. It is true that the philosophy propounded by Sankara was different from that of Ramanuja, and a synthesis of the two in the form of establishing communion with that one supreme and highest spirit, through Bhakti and devotion alone, is noticed in the way shown by the other religious thinkers of the age.

The Mediaeval period in Indian history is also notable for the influence of Indian mysticism on Islamic thought and the growth of Muslim sufism. Though its origin is traced outside India, the Indian influence on this phase of Islamic thought, either indirectly through neo-Platonism,

or directly through Indian scholars and saints, cannot be denied. This religious stream which flowed in that period cannot be described as mere escapism from the misery of wars, bloodshed and civil strife. It was a natural outburst of emotionalism without reference to time, space or even religion—a fact which we propose stressing in detail.

Sankara and Other Reformers

Sankara, born of Nambudri Brahmin parents at Kaladi in Malabar, is a household name among the Hindus in general, and the high intelligence in particular. He is the only philosopher of the East with whom the greatest metaphysicians of the West are supposed to claim philosophical and scientific kinship. A pupil of Govinda Yogi, he became soon familiar with the treasure of knowledge and after passing time as an ascetic he unravelled the great secret of life. Travelling all over the country he had intellectual combats in which he was always triumphant. With a solitary mission in life to establish the supremacy of the Vedantic Hinduism, he purged out the conflicting and fissiparous tendencies in it and established one logical system, popularly known as monoism—*eko Brahman Dvitiyo naṣti*—In his Advaitavada, the philosophical concepts of the Madhyamika schools echo, and by criticising and disparaging the Mimamsakas, according to Elliot, he eliminated the thin barrier between the Buddhist laity and Hinduism. This proved disastrous for the last remnant of Buddhism in India, and this great religion of the east eclipsed in the land of its birth. The central point of Sankara's philosophy is that nothing is real except Brahman of which the human soul is a part, and the material objects are mere illusions (*jagad mithya*). He thoroughly organised Brahmanism in its new setting, and, by appointing Pontiffs at the four religious *pithas,* he laid the foundation of a strong Brahmanical Papal organization which has sustained its vitality even to this day.

Southern India, once again, produced another spiritual leader in the person of Ramanuja who was born at Tirupati in 1016 A.D. in a Dravida Brahmana family. Initiated first at Conjeeveram by a follower of Sankara,

Ramanuja parted company with him because of the spirit of dialecticism and sturdy independent spirit in him. Later he was invited by Yamnamuni, and, having attained accomplishment in his academic pursuits, he wrote several commentaries including one on Bhagavad gita. He had to leave Srirangam for political reasons, and he shifted to the court of Vithal deva Hoysala whom he converted from Jainism. Ramanuja's philosophy centred round Vishnu, the supreme deity who occasionally takes birth in human incarnations for the salvation of the people. Bhakti, according to Ramanuja, is not blind love or faith. It is that supreme devotion to God, which springs from good action in the past, and which is attainable only through rigid rules of discipline. According to Prof. Rangaswami Aiyangar, he infused into Bhakti the wisdom of the Advaita which ultimately brings release from rebirth and suffering.

The movement of bhakti or devotion was carried to the north by a teacher named Ramananda in the fourteenth century who preached the teachings of Ramanuja. He stressed on devotion to the Deity in the form of Vishnu with his incarnations Rama and Krishna. He was more interested in uplifting the poor and depressed, and drew no distinction on grounds of position, caste or creed. He had as his disciples persons representing different creeds and positions. Kabir was his famous disciple who attacked the orthodox with equal vehemence and courage. A fuller survey of Bhaktism in Northern India is reserved for another chapter. Here we only suggest that these southern Indian thinkers were precursors of a new and developed Bhaktism with which Tulsi, Mira, Sur and Kabir were associated and of which Chaitanya in the east and Namadeva in the west were ardent propagators.

Sufi Mysticism

The origin of Sufism which adds to the creed of the prophet mysticism, love and devotion is traced, according to some scholars, in neo-Platonism rather than in the east. It is suggested that many Arab writers, like Avicenna (Ibn Sina) and Averros (Ibn Rushd) were influenced by

Greek philosophy, but in later Sufism Indian influence is admitted as stronger and the conception of the identity of soul with the divinity—the 'Ana-l-haq,' 'I am the truth or God' might well be compared with the Hindu conception of *So' ham asmi*—'That am I'. Several important sufi saints came within the sphere of Indian influence and Indian wisdom found patronage in the land of the Caliphs. In the Sultanate period, there were several muslim saints who enjoyed universal respect. Nizamuddin Auliya and Sheikh Salim Chisti were some of the most important muslim saints. They served as spiritual guides to the devotee on the path of union with God. A sufi saint was supposed to possess divine authority, and he gathered round him a band of disciples and admirers. His divine status was attributed to his union with God.

The conceptions of Muslim Pirs or divine heads may well have been the result of contact with Hinduism which also accords a high position to the guru. Sufism continued to flourish and it won important personalities to its fold. The mystic element in Islam, based on intense devotion which could be expressed through love and passion, resulted in that stage of ecstasy where the devotee felt in union with God. This was a common platform where the Hindus and Muslims could agree, and whether it be Muslim Sufism or Hindu Bhaktism the goal was the same. The thin edge of the difference was the conception of a single God or the polytheism of Hinduism though they were all manifestations of that one supreme and ultimate spirit—the Vedic conception of *ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti.*

The Mediaeval period of Indian history is really one of Indian reformation—not Hindu alone. If it was an age of civil strife, war of succession and blood shed, it was equally associated with that breadth of outlook—that feeling of intense devotion and unionism with God, as a supreme spirit or manifested in different forms. The second aspect is carried still further by the saints of the Mughal period who propagated the Oneness of God without reference to any particular creed.

CHAPTER XVIII

INDIA UNDER THE SULTANATE EMPERORS

THE Sultanate period of Indian history is supposed to be an era of bloodshed, civil strife, debauchery and intellectual stagnation. Within a period of a little over three hundred years, more than thirty rulers belonging to five families ruled with an individual reign seldom exceeding two decades, and the court of Delhi becoming the hot-bed of intrigues and underhand politics. Sometimes the effiminate and low class converts like Kafur had an upper hand. The constant threats from the Mughals, culminating in the invasion of Taimur in 1398 completely paralysed the fast declining Delhi Sultanate with its authority confined to Delhi and Punjab alone. The rise of the Provincial kingdoms of Bengal, Jaunpur, Malwa and Gujrat, had shifted the political gravity from Delhi to Lakhnauti, Jaunpur, Mandor and Ahmedabad. The founding of the famous Bhamani kingdom and that of Vijayanagar, was an important landmark in this period for both these kingdoms not only wielded strong political influence for a sufficiently long time but were also centres of intense intellectual and artistic awakening. The time factor was very important for the Rajputs who consolidated their position in Rajputana; and, throwing off that semblance of Muslim sovereignty, they served as a strong force in Mediaeval Indian History.

The complete history of Mediaeval India in the first half is a record of expansion of the Sultanate Empire under Alauddin, as far as the kingdom of the Pandyas, in the extreme south, and from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian sea, rivalling that of the Mauryas. But the other half of the Sultanate period is one of disintegration and emergence of several kingdoms which had cut off their moorings and were floating independently in the rough sea of Indian Islamism which was the sole unifying factor, though they

were separated from each other by hundreds of miles. The Delhi court was dominated by the Turks and other foreign Islamic elements of which Barni has given a graphic account.

Cultural Unity

Despite the political short-comings, the forces in the way of cultural regeneration were not at a standstill, nor had stagnation set in the intellectual sphere. As a matter of fact, it is just the other way round. The Sultanate period represents a formative stage, and seeds were sown in this age for the growth and efflorescence of that strong cultural renaissance in the Mughal period. The Delhi kings had established political unity between the north and the south, which, however, could not be retained for long; but the unity in the other sphere—that of Bhakti and devotion which originated in the south—remained undisturbed for ages. With Chaitanya and Namadeo from Bengal and Maharashtra and Ramananda and Kabir from Northern India, the Bhakti movement attained that status and popularity amongst the masses which eliminated distinction on grounds of creed. Even Muslim rulers like Husangshah in Bengal patronised this movement, and there are several instances of Muslim Vaishnava saints carrying the tale of Radha Krishna—the unionism of the soul with ultimate spirit.

This broad and catholic outlook aiming at the oneness of God can be attributed to several other rulers as well. Even bigoted ones like Alauddin Khalji afforded recognition and honour to Hindu and Jain saints, and cases are cited of some Jain ones having discourse with, and recognition from the Khalji emperor. Power-drunk, bad-tempered, arrogant and hard-hearted Allauddin excelled in shedding innocent blood, but it is less likely that his discourses with the propagators of the cult of Ahimsa were in any way an act of repentence on his part for his past commissions and omissions. He had a Hindu Chancellor of the Exchequer, and it is probable that his campaigns were more out of the lust for political domination rather than for religious obscurantism. Alauddin refused to accept Qazi Mughisuddin's advice to crush the Hindus. Feroz, the great bigot,

who reintroduced Jazia held in great esteem the poet Ratna Sekhara while his predecessor Mohammad Tughlaq boldly defied the dogmatism in Islam. In the Deccan, too, Hindu scholars adorned the court of Ibrahim Qutab Shah.

The Third Force

While the Delhi Sultanate was dominated by the Turkish Amirs who maintained their foreign character, and the Provincial Muslim states displayed their independence with a strong feeling of Indian Islamism, the third force was that of the Rajputs who were noted for their chivalry and boldness of character. The eloquent tribute to their heroism, paid by Colonel Tod, is well deserved. "What nation of earth would have maintained the semblance of civilisation, the spirit or the customs of their forefathers, during so many centuries of overwhelming depression, but one of such singular character as the Rajput. Rajasthan exhibits the sole example in history of mankind, of a people withstanding every outrage barbarity can inflict or human nature sustain and bent to the earth, yet rising buoyant from the pressure and making calamity a whetstone to courage". From the time of Chandrabardi, the class of Hindi kavya or poetry of the so-called Viragathakala, had emerged, and it was confined to the biography of the Rajput heroes in verses. The Rajputs kept up the tradition of their organised opposition to the foreign power. The Guhilots, at first, claimed the leadership of the military confederacy. It passed on to Grant Hammira whose glory is sung in *Hammiravijaya.* Alauddin was partially successful against them, but in the last decade of the fourteenth century Rajputana shook off that semblance of Delhi sovereignty, and in the time of Maharana Kumbha (1433-68) the Mewar kingdom attained its full glory. By defeating the Muslim Sultans of Gujarat and Malwa, the Hindu Rajput Rajya was established over the whole of Rajputana which served as a strong buffer state between Delhi and Gujarat, and it equally stood as an embodiment of Indian patriotic spirit before the Mughals as well. What was true of the Rajput heroes Hammira and Kumbha can equally be said with regard to Krishna deva and Rama Raja of Vijayanagar who stemmed

the progress of Islam further south and kept the banner of Hindu nationalism flying. This third force in mediaeval Indian history not only kept the balance of power intact, but Rajputana and Vijayanagar shone as two refulgent luminaries in the political horizon even during the Mughal period.

The Literary Output

In the field of literature and art, the contribution of this period is not meagre. Despite the emergence of the vernacular language, especially Hindi in which Bhaktism got itself crystallized, Sanskrit continued to retain its spiritual character. Somesvaradatta, author of *Kirtikaumudi* and *Surathotsava,* Arisinha of the thirteenth century, the composer of *Sukritasankirtana,* and Sadhyakaranandin who wrote *Ramapalacharita.* and the Kashmir writers who continued the *Rajatarangini,* are only a few scholars who might not be compared with Asvaghosha and Kalidasa, but they kept the torch of Sanskrit Kavya burning in that period. The famous commentators on the Smritis—Kulluka, Haradatta, Jinaprabhasuri and Madhavacharya—also the writer of the famous compendium on philosophical systems—*Sarvadarsanasangraha,* and, lastly, Sayanacharya, the famous commentator on the Rigveda, all belonged to this period though they were from different states. Even some Muslim rulers patronised Sanskrit learning, as for example, Nusrat Shah encouraged Maladhara Vasu to undertake translation of the Bhagavadgita. A few muslims also wrote Padavalis and thus met their Hindu counterparts on a spiritual plane.

Artistic Achievements

The period is equally notable for the contributions in the realm of art and architecture. While Hindu architecture without any foreign influence manifested itself in the famous temple of Surya at Konarak and the column of victory at Chittor, Muslim architecture was displayed on an equally grand scale at the provincial centres—particularly at Jaunpur, Mandu and Ahmedabad. These represent a synthesis of the Islamic conception and Hindu

craftsmanship. The Hindu architects were noted for their talents, and, when Taimur invaded Delhi, he took with him a large number of them to display their architectural ingenuity in his capital at Samarkand where he set up a huge mosque as an example of Indian workmanship.

The Mediaeval period in Indian history is not accorded the position it deserves. While the darker side is painted vividly, the silver lining in the dark clouds of the political horizon has not been traced in full. On this bed-rock of Indian civilisation with the contributions of the Hindus and the Muslims of this period, was raised the edifice of the Mughal culture. Neither religious devotion nor intellectual and cultural renaissance would have seen the light of the day, had the seeds not been sown in the fertile soil of the Mediaeval period.

CHAPTER XIX

THE AGE OF THE IMPERIAL MUGHALS

THE Mughal period in Indian history is notable for bringing about the political unification of the country and establishing solidarity under a national state, national in the sense that the good government depended as much on the consent of the people governed, as on the firm hold of the ruler governing them, with a close liaison between the two. The record of Imperial Mughal rule centres round six personalities—Babur, a remarkable soldier who had seen tough days, Humayun, a mixture of contrasts, energy alternating with despondency and sloth; Akbar, no doubt a political success, but with a strong sense of egotism in him; Jehangir, temperamentally artistic and generous but equally indulgent; Shahjehan with a refined and polished taste but indecisive and weak; and lastly Aurangzeb, the most shrewd, ambitious and bigoted ruler who shed more innocent blood than any one else. His long reign of nearly half a century exhausted the resources—financial and military—with his dreams of an Islamic state in India remaining unmaterialised. It only paved the way for the rise of Hindu nationalism and a strong anti-Mughal feeling which was manifest in his time, and was responsible for the downfall of the Mughal empire.

This long record of nearly two hundred years is not one of struggle for establishing political unity in the country alone, in fact, it witnessed the birth of a new era—with the Hindu-Muslim cultural synthesis, the Bhakti movement in its full bloom, colossal literary, academic and artistic output, with the kings and princes promoting the creative spirit.

Towards a National State

Unlike his ancestor Taimur, noted for vandalism and acts of savagery, Babur, after his victories at Panipat and

Khanwa, took a more constructive attitude, and in his record of a little over four years the Delhi Padshah left a secure footing for the Mughals in India. His son Humayun had neither the vitality of his father in him, nor did he possess the strategy and cunningness of his adversary Shershah. After his defeat at Chausa in 1539, he turned a fugitive for fifteen years to reappear again on the political horizon. The brief interval was not uneventful. Shershah aimed at Afghan unity and political domination, but his sudden death, leaving weak successors with real power ultimately vesting in the Hindu Vazir Hemu, was an invitation to Humayun. In the midst of political turmoil, the Mughal fugitive, descending from Kabul, occupied Delhi and Agra and recovered his kingdom, which he could enjoy for barely six months. He died in an accident in 1556 leaving a young son Akbar under the care and regency of Bairam Khan, whose loyalty and military skill saved the Mughal throne at a difficult and dangerous hour. Akbar combined in himself reckless drive and military genius, and he became the master of an empire extending from Balkh to the Vindhyas in twenty years time. His conquests extended even further; and, with the exception of Maharana Pratap of Chittor who reconciled himself to his fate rather than submitting to the emperor, the rest owed him allegiance. Akbar chose to be tolerant and the narrow minded attitude of the Mullas did not appeal to him. Some talented and fine spirited Musalmans, like Shaikh Mubarak and his sons Abul Fazal and Faizi, shared his views. His policy of amity and goodwill towards the Hindus won their heart and allegiance. With the abolition of the poll tax and Jazia, the Hindus no longer considered themselves to be second class citizens. In Akbar's bureaucratic administrative machinery they had a big share.

Akbar attempted to establish a truly national state by affording equal opportunities and privileges to the Hindus. Jehangir and Shah Jehan with a greater degree of Hindu blood in them tried to adhere to his theological eclecticism and broad outlook, but a rigidly orthodox and fanatic Mohammadan sentiment was brewing up at the

Mughal court. Jehangir's retaliation against the Portuguese, the torturing of the Sikh Guru Arjuna, and the destruction of some of the important Hindu temples in Shah Jehan's time created distrust in the minds of the non-Muslims. Aurangzeb in his record rule of fifty years toiled with relentless fervour to destroy the edifice of the National state of his great grandfathers, and set up in its place a theocratic state based on the tenets of Islam. He failed in his mission. Neither the dissentient Rajputs could be brought to submission, nor the valiant Marathas be crushed. He more or less chased his shadow and died a broken man with a disintegrated empire, a decrepit successor and hosts of enemies. The attempt to set up a theocratic state ended in smoke, and it should serve as a lesson of history to posterity.

Bhaktism in its Spring Bloom

The Mughal period saw the emergence of Bhaktism in its full bloom, and even Muslims were swept off their feet. The influence of Chaitanya who died early in the sixteenth century was so great in Northern India, especially in Bengal, that Sakar Malik and Dabirkhan left their position, wealth and faith and joined the Master assuming the name of Sanatana and Rupa, and settled down at Vrindavana, the earthly paradise. Even Akbar visited this place in the company of Man Singh and the Govindji temple was built in his time. Chaitanya's personality, and the force in his songs and kirtan, and above all his firm love and devotion opened a new vista in the realm of Bhaktism. It became a strong creative force in the country pulsating the life of the people in general. The impulse spread from Vrindaban to Gujarat, culminating in the production of two bhakti poets—Mirabai and Narasi Mehta. Mira was a younger contemporary of Chaitanya and she left her princely home for homeliness in quest of her Giridhar Gopal in whom she ultimately merged herself. Earlier, she drank the cup of poison and fully testified her intense love and devotion to Giridhar, her supreme beloved. The padas or devotional songs composed by her depict her pure passion, grace, melody and a divine touch.

Tulsi and Sur concentrated on Rama and Krishna respectively as their tutelary divinity. Tulsi's devotion to his Rama and that, too, in the form of a hero culminated in his *Rama Charita manas*, popularly called Ramayana, the Hindu Bible. It is flooded with that inner feeling of intense devotion towards his god whom he perceived everywhere. A touching picture of Rama's adventures in his human form, and his intense sympathy for his *bhaktas* or devotees gleans through the 'lake of the Deeds of Rama,' and it has won for the poet that love, esteem and honour which sustains even to this day. Sur Das, the blind poet of Agra, was a devotee of Krishna and his famous padas from *Surasagar* are still sung by millions of Krishna's devotees.

In the Punjab, Nanak carried the message of bhakti among the masses. He died in 1538 and was a junior contemporary of Kabir. He tried to abolish caste distinction as well as idolatry, and the system which he founded had no place for rituals either. The *Adi-granth*—the Sacred book of the Sikhs—was completed by the fifth guru and the militant spirit in this religious organisation was infused by Guru Govinda Singh against the Mughals. In the Deccan too the cult of devotion was in its full bloom. A school of poets concentrated on devotional songs in honour of Vithoba, another form of Vishnu. Tukaram was the most famous Marathi poet and he was a contemporary of Shivaji.

It appears that the cult of devotion or Bhaktism was flourishing in all parts of India. Some of the scholars have attributed the monotheistic element in it to the impact of Islam, but the conception of one supreme and ultimate spirit though manifested in different forms, was a Vedic feature, and Bhaktism too is a fairly old religious phase. It is likely that the strong sense of love and devotion towards any particular deity, which is very akin to the monotheistic conception of Islam, and the elimination of the feeling of caste distinctions and rituals might have created a common ground, and a unifying force between the Hindus and the Muslims from all parts of India.

Bhaktism paved the way for religious and cultural unity in the country.

Synthesis in Literature and Art

Closer cooperation between the Hindus and Muslims extended to the spheres of literature and art. While Persian attained the status of the Court language and Todarmal introduced it for maintaining records, Sanskrit and the Vernaculars were also encouraged and both Hindus and Muslims took active part in the development of these languages with their literary contributions. Kashi or Benaras was a great centre of Sanskrit studies and Kavindracharya was the shining luminary of the intellectual horizon in that period. He was not only a great scholar attracting foreigners like Bernier, but also exercised considerable influence over Shahjehan. Darashikoh was his ardent supporter and admirer, as is evident from his letter in Sanskrit written to this Indian doyen of scholarship. Among the Muslim Sanskrit scholars, Dara's name stands first with his *Samudrasangam* or 'the mingling of oceans'. Badauni was commissioned by Akbar to translate the Kashmirian chronicle *Rajatarangini*, a history of Kashmir, and Faizi was another Muslim Sanskrit scholar who translated *Bhagavad Gita* into Persian. Hindi also claimed several Muslim talents—like Malik Mohammad Jayasi, the author of *Padmavata*, and Abdur Rahim Khan Khana who was well up in Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit; and his Hindi poetry is of a very high quality. Raskhan was not only a Muslim poet who enriched Hindi with his 'Garden of love', but he was also a sincere devotee of Krishna.

This active Hindu-Muslim co-operation embraced the field of art as well. Indian music shed its glory on the Mughal culture, and its greatest patrons were the Emperors, provincial chiefs and the grandees—both Hindu and Muslims. Except in the time of Aurangzeb, Music was a part of the life at the Mughal court. It attained its classical form with Tansen, Jagannath, Janardana Bhatta, and Ram Das as the greatest exponents of the age. This fine art was not confined to the north alone, but in the south

as well it was patronised by the local chiefs. In the realm of painting, Abdus Samad, the Persian doyen in the court of Akbar, along with Saiyad Ali and Faruog Beg, and Hindu painters like Basawan, Daswanth, Sanwal Das, Tara Chand and others are notable for their artistic skill and mastery over the brush. The Muslim school specialised in portraits and in depicting objects of nature including birds, while the Rajput school drew its subjects from the fountain of Hindu legends and was deeply religious in its theme.

The architectural contribution of this period is immense. Besides Delhi, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri and Lahore which represent the materialisation of the dreams of the Mughal emperors, the Hindu-Muslim architects joined hands in other regions as well. Deccan became equally famous for its famous monuments like the Gol Gomoz at Bijapur. The Persian taste is reflected in the lay out of the beautiful gardens, lovely baths and other specimens of luxurious tastes. These monuments, which are still preserved, are a fitting tribute not only to the Emperors who erected them but also to the Indian masons for their architectural talents.

The Mughal period of Indian history is really one of synthesis and active co-operation between the Hindus and Muslims. A new dawn had set in the Indian horizon and men's talents were harnessed in different directions. The influence of the ladies is also accountable. Nurjehan, Jehanara, Roshanara and among the Hindus Jijabai exercised considerable political influence. There were talented ladies like Gulbadan, Zebunissa, Vaijayanti and Vallabhadevi—who made literary contributions. The social life of the people in the hey-days of the Mughal rule had undergone great changes with particular reference to their dress and food. The close fitting achkan or long tunic, and the churidar pyjama with a turban—(mauli) combined the Persian and the Hindu elements in Indian dress. Food and items of dessert were very rich. It seems that the Hindus and the Muslims had come very close to each other with a synthesis of culture. The marital relations esta-

blished by Akbar, his son, and grandson, with the Rajputs were a healthy feature aimed at a complete assimilation of the two divergent flows, and his Din Elahi was a step further in this direction. Probably Akbar was a little ahead of his time in the propagation of his religious views. His successors could not identify themselves with his outlook, and Aurangazeb ultimately put the clock back with the Mughal empire cracking on the weak foundation of a theocratic state which he aimed at setting up. The dusk of decline had already set in, and the period following witnessed the rule of weak puppet Mughals, and the emergence of new strong political forces in Indian history.

CHAPTER XX

HINDU NATIONALISM AND EUROPEAN COLONIALISM

THE three hundred years of Muslim rule in India had not extinguished the militant nationalist spirit of the Hindus. It is true that the conciliatory policy of Akbar had befriended Hindu Rajputs who considered themselves a part and parcel of the National State with equal rights and privileges. The policy pursued by Jehangir and Shahjehan was devoid of that tolerant and friendly approach, while Aurangazeb's idea of a truly Islamic State prepared the ground for the parting of ways. Several strong powers emerged—the Sikhs in the north, the Rajputs in the centre and the Marathas in the south. The Sikhs, who under Nanak started as a religious group believing in the unity of God and the elimination of caste or creed, were gradually turning into a strong militant force. The torturing of Guru Arjuna and the execution of Guru Teg Bahadur, added fuel to the fire and the tenth guru Govinda Singh organised his followers into a strong militia, and they became a source of perpetual trouble to the Mughals. The Rajputs, too, were alienated. Aurangazeb's policy of suspicion and his interference in their internal affairs—as for example his attempt to bring up Raja Jaswant Singh's sons as Muslims—caused the greatest amount of indignation in the Rajput circles. The succeeding steps only complicated the issue and the Rajput pillars being removed, the Mughal edifice was left without any strong support. The position was still more serious in the Deccan where Shivaji, inspired by Guru Ram Das, was the head of a new force which was based on an emotional feeling of Hindu revivalism. The deep sense of religious duty was a unifying factor among the masses. Shivaji's death and Shambhaji's execution failed to break the Maratha morale; and, when Aurangzeb died, the Marathas had established

a well secured position in the South. In course of time they were turned into a very strong power which extended as far as Delhi and even beyond, with the Mughal rulers as puppets in their hands.

The Advent of the Europeans

The sixteenth century also witnessed the emergence of naval powers in Indian history. From very early times the sea-faring Indians had established colonies in the Far East, and the hundred years' war between the mighty Sailendra rulers and the Cholas attained a proverbial fame in naval history. With the decline of these powers, the Arabs paced their steps for furthering their commercial interests and attaining mastery in Indian waters. The situation in the West underwent change with the rise of the Arabs and Turks, and the growing demand for Indian finished products. The European powers entered the field of commercial competition. The Portuguese were the first to establish their factory in India with the cross in one hand and sword in another, and they were interested in trade, land and native converts. Under Albuquerque, the Portuguese became rich, but their short-sighted policy of religious intolerance alienated the confidence of the people in them. The supremacy of the British power after the defeat of the Spanish Armada, the loss of Ormuz commanding the Persian Gulf and the transfer of Bombay to the English Crown were serious blows to the Portuguese power in India. In the words of Alfonzo De Suza (1445), "the Portuguese entered India with the sword in one hand and the crucifix in another; finding much gold they laid aside the crucifix to fill their pockets, and not being able to hold them up with one hand, they were grown so heavy, they dropped the sword too; being found in this posture by those who came after, they were easily overcome."

The Dutch supplanted the Portuguese in the Eastern Seas. They prospered with their factories at Pulicat, Agra, Patna, Surat and Ahmedabad, so long as they confined their energies to trade alone. Their interference in politics brought them into clash with the English, and, with the decline of their power in India, they exchanged their

Indian possessions with those of the British in Sumatra. The English and the French, who entered this oriental trade more or less at the same time, were left alone in India, and a trial for supremacy between the two was inevitable. The French under Dupleix were interested in establishing an empire in India and they freely interfered in the affairs of the local states. The French lost their trade monopoly and Indian possessions in their conflict with the English due to several reasons—denial of help from home, concentration on political matters alone neglecting the trade interests, and lastly, not being a match for the English who were noted for their national pride.

The English took full advantage of the simplicity, credibility and faithfulness of the Indians. They used methods more subtle, sure and less showy. They created dissension and by all possible means tried to wipe out the independent existence of the Indian states. As pointed by Sir John Kaye, "the violation of the existing covenants involved *ipso facto* a loss of territory. The Britishers violated the treaties whenever convenient, and the planting of British residents by the Indian princes was a fatal mistake." With the break up of the Mughal empire, the English made up their mind firmly to rule over India rather than be compelled to surrender either to the Indian powers, or to be driven out of the country, and in fulfilling this mission, sufferings and disasters never shook their firm determination. The result was the establishment of the British empire in India.

CHAPTER XXI

THE STRUGGLE FOR EMPIRE

SHORTLY after Aurangzeb's death, the Mughal empire declined. In less than twelve years there were five five rulers and three wars of succession. The Mughal empire did not meet a violent end but continued to linger on with the provinces dropping out and forming themselves into independent states. The Nizam of Hyderabad, at first a Mughal Viceroy, the Nawab Wazir of Oudh, the Rohillas in Bareilly and the Nawab of Bengal shook the dust of Delhi off their feet. The Mughal Emperor was powerless and a mere spectator at the rising ebb of the Marathas and the slowly growing power of the English. The Persians, too, were watching the fast deteriorating situation with eagle eyes. Nadir Shah availed of the opportunity and in 1738 he entered Delhi. The massacre of the Indian citizens and the loot and plunder that followed is an old story. India lost its frontier provinces, and the Mughal emperor, his treasured wealth. In this anarchical state the Marathas played the leading role knocking at the gates of Calcutta, and watering their horses in the Indus, and the Nizam too had to part with several districts. The Maratha empire became unmanageable. Their clash with the Afghan ruler Ahmed Shah Durrani at the famous battle of Panipat in 1761 was a great blow to them. They lost power and prestige.

The English, too, were not inactive. After the battle of Plassey in 1757 and that of Buxar in 1761, the northern Indian powers lost initiative and strength, and the foundation of the British empire in India was firmly laid by Clive. With the grant of pension and protection to Shah Alam in return for Diwani rights in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and the stationing of English forces in Kaira and Allahabad, the

British hold in Northern India became firm and strong. In the south the French lost their possessions, prestige and power, and, with the concluding treaty at the end of the seven years' war, there was a change of fortune. The recall of Dupleix proved fatal for the French, and the English consolidated their position with the possession of the Northern Circars. In the extreme south, Hyderali had made himself master of Mysore and his steadily increasing power was a cause of concern and also a warning to the English.

India in the Eighteenth Century

As a result of incessant wars, foreign invasions, and weak Mughal rulers paving the way for the rise and growth of English power in India, a sense of depression had set in the Indian masses. They were politically insecure, socially backward and economically frustrated and ruined. The English company and its servants took full advantage of the fast deteriorating situation. The Indian merchants and industrialists suffered considerably and the economic life was paralysed. With the introduction of the Permanent settlement in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, while the intermediaries prospered, the tiller of the soil lost his interest in the land and his position became unstable. The cottage industries also suffered. In Bengal, the production of raw silk dried up. The invention of machines helped the English manufacturers and there was practically no market for Indian finished goods. The Indian financiers and firms could not compete with the English vested interests. The result was that India was reduced to a status of economic subjugation with her fast dwindling national wealth. Unemployment and internal insecurity had let loose the evil social forces like the Thugs and Pindaris. Above all, the intriguing and scandalous nature of the company servants and their lust for money had alienated the confidence of the people in the Company rule. India was passing through an age of depression in every sphere, and the need

for a strong power which could bring security to the people was urgently felt.

High Politics

Though Clive laid the foundation of the British empire in India, his successors were no match to his chicanery and experiments in fraud. Warren Hastings, despite his other shortcomings, was a liberal statesman sympathetic towards the people, and his long stay stabilised the position of the Company and consolidated the political gains. The Indian adversaries could not be crippled and the inevitable conflict with them was postponed for some time. Cornwallis, though a great soldier himself, suffered from the disadvantage of being new to the Indian political situation, and he could not cut much ice. Sir John Shore's policy of 'masterly inactivity' proved disastrous for the British prestige, with the French becoming influential in several Indian courts. With Wellesley opened a new era of high politics. He reduced the Mysore state to political subjugation by exiling the family of Tipu and handing it over to a scion of the old Hindu Raja. He settled the affairs in Oudh, and, by creating dissension in the Maratha camp, he purchased the Peshwa offering him protection in lieu of his independence. As a result of the wars with Sindhia and Holkar, the Maratha power was curbed and in 1803 the British entered Delhi, with the blind Mughal emperor, a mere semblance of the vanished glory. Wellesley changed the complexion in six years' time. Practically no part of India except Rajputana, Sind and the Punjab retained its Independence. The rise of Ranjit Singh in the Punjab at the expense of the Afghans, and the foundation of the Sikh kingdom, was in the interest of the British. It served as a buffer state, affording protection against the possible foreign infiltration into India. In Lord Hastings' time Deccan was annexed and joined to the Bombay Presidency, and the Mighty Maratha empire thus ended. Hastings completed the work initiated by Wellesley. Sind and the Punjab were left over for some time. In Ellenborough's time Sind was conquered by

Napier, and the final blow to the Punjab was given by Dalhousie who annexed it altogether with the British frontier extending upto the mountains.

Thus ended the era of high politics which had culminated in the vast British empire in India, but underneath was brewing up that fire of antagonism and bitterness which assumed the shape of a conflagration in 1857 when the Indian powers raised their heads to eradicate and extinguish the British rule in India.

CHAPTER XXII

THE BIRTH OF A NEW ERA

THE beginning of the nineteenth century ushers in a new era in Indian history. It is one of political consolidation, social regeneration and intellectual awakening. From Wellesley to Dalhousie, a bold policy was pursued with occasional pauses which had resulted in the integration of most of the Indian states into the British Empire in India. This was achieved at the cost of happy Indo-British relations, which might have resulted if a sympathetic policy had been pursued. The company was not interested in raising the intellectual tone of the people. It was, however, in 1781 that the Hindu College was founded to impart Sanskrit instructions in Calcutta, and similar steps were taken for Arabic and Persian studies in Bengal. The founding of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1784 by Sir William Jones, a Judge of the Supreme Court and himself an erudite scholar and a great orientalist, opened a vista for research in ancient Indian thought and culture It was an attempt to rediscover India's past, for which the credit is entirely due to the European savants. The higher caste Hindus were not slow to avail of the opportunities for studies and with the widening of the Indian horizon, due to impact with western thought, the Bengali intelligentsia gave strong vent to their feelings against certain social customs and evils. In the second decade of the nineteenth century, the pioneer Indian social reformer, Ram Mohan Roy, the father of Indian renaissance, took up cudgels against the orthodox social trends; while Macaulay in the third decade with his famous Minute changed the entire complexion of the Company's educational policy and opened the way for higher education in English. This was subsequently adopted by Sir Charles Wood, in 1854, and the three famous Universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras saw the light of the day in 1857. Thus, the early part of the nineteenth cen-

tury centres round three important personalities—Sir William Jones, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Macaulay who poured the new wine of western culture and thought into the old bottle of Hindu social organism. It must, however, be made very explicit that the Mohammadans looked at this impact and awakening with suspicion and they *en masse* kept aloof from it.

Reorientation of the Past

The importance of Sanskrit treasuring India's past, was well realised as early as the seventeenth century, but it was not till the end of the eighteenth century that steps were taken to convey Indian thought and culture as embedded in the sacred scriptures to the western world. The credit for this bold venture is entirely due to Sir William Jones. With the English translation of *Bhagavad-Gita,* 'the song celestial' by Wilkins, and of *Sakuntala* by Jones, Sanskrit language, life and thought were formally introduced into the western world. The first Chair for Sanskrit studies was founded by Colonel Boden, on August 15, 1811 at Oxford with the special object of promoting the translation of the scriptures into Sanskrit, so as to enable his countrymen to proceed in the conversion of the natives of India to the Christian Religion. The establishment of Sanskrit Chairs at Bonn, Berlin, and College de France between 1820-32 paved the way for Sanskrit studies in the West. In India, too, it created a sense of importance and pride in ancient Indian culture, and Indians became conscious of its vitality which sustained it for such a long time.

Social Regeneration

During the Company's rule there was complete social segregation, with the Englishmen as a separate ruling class, the Muslims also divided in several groups—the Afghans, the native converts and the lower class converts, and the Hindus, as usual, labouring under a complex social structure. Women were relegated to an inferior position inside the house. Indian society was stagnant and many evils had crept in—Suttee or the burning of the Hindu widows, slavery, female infanticide, besides the Thugs and the

Pindaris who had a strong organization and had paralysed traffic. The problem of the Pindaris and the Thugs was solved on a state level by Lord Hastings and Bentinck, and these evils were cômpletely eradicated. The case of Suttees was taken up in right earnest by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the great feminist. He tried to uplift the Hindu society from that moral torpor. He propagated for the betterment of the status of women by abolishing Suttee, and sought to provide spiritual sustenance to the intelligent middle class by introducing radical reforms in Hinduism. Suttee was stopped by Law in 1830. The Brahma Samaj, the institution founded by the Raja, did not flourish for long due to internal dissensions and the rise of the regenerated Hindu spirit in the latter half of the nineteenth century under Maharshi Dwarka Nath Tagore and Kesho Chandra Sen. Hinduism revived and this regeneration and new spirit was not confined to Bengal alone, but even Bombay and the Punjab also tasted the wisdom that flowed from the enlightened minds of this age. The message of the reformed Hinduism was also carried to the western world by Swami Vivekanand, the bold and brilliant disciple of Paramahansa Rama Krishna.

Intellectual Toning

The Sanskrit colleges and the Muslim Madarsas established in the last quarter of the eighteenth century did not meet the academic requirements of the people. Even private schools run by the missionaries, among whom David Hare was the pioneer, gave only elementary teaching in English. The fear was that English education would make Indians politically conscious, and they would demand rights and privileges. Macaulay, the President of the Board of Education, closed a long chapter of controversy about the system of education for the Indians, and Bentinck issued the epoch-making resolution laying down that the great object of the British government was promoting European language and science for Indians. The momentous change brought about in the field of education profoundly affected the history of the country. The attitude of those Indians who came into direct contact with the English was recep-

tive, but others were critical and hostile. Literacy was not regarded as a necessary feature and it remained confined only to the higher and middle classes. The Christian missionaries at Serampore also experimented in Journalism which was taken up by the Indians in right earnest. English education, newspapers and the preaching of Christianity were definitely conducive to a healthy intellectual atmosphere with the liberal minded people anxious to get the best out of the English rule, but the conservative ones took it as a warning for the break up of their social institutions. The Muslims were still in the back-water.

The introduction of the Railways, Posts and Telegraphs, ensured efficiency in the country's administration, but it appears that the people were not prepared for these reforms. They were awaiting an opportunity to express their resentment. The higher and the middle class Hindus found it very congenial to their tastes and they saw in western education social values which were easily acceptable. Political discontentment as a result of the bold policy pursued by the Governor Generals, especially Dalhousie, set the fire of antagonism slowly brewing, and the 'greased cartridges' discontentment was only an excuse for the proper display of that political insurrection that shook the foundations of the British empire in India.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE INDIAN REVOLT AND AFTER

THE Indian revolt of 1857 against the British rule in India is supposed by many scholars to be nothing more than a sepoys' mutiny. This view is probably based on the version which took no account of that feeling of bitterness and political antagonism which was sweeping over the country viewing all administrative reforms with suspicion. Dalhousie's 'Doctrine of Lapse' had embittered the relations of the British with the Indian States. The Indian peasant had lost his initiative, while the intermediaries prospered, and this landholder class became the ardent supporter of the English rule. The Indian mason and craftsman too lost their vocation, and were economically paralysed and financially ruined. With the machine age and the vested English commercial interests, India's trade and commerce was crippled. This economic factor was no less important for creating distrust and discontentment in the minds of the people who were tired of the English rule which might have benefitted the land holder and the native Babu class, but was, on the whole, an attempt to subjugate India politically and financially. The 'greased cartridges' incident was only a spark that set ablaze the fire of discontentment.

This revolt lasted for a little over a year, and want of concentrated efforts, ill-planning and lack of coherence were the main causes for its failure. Co-operation was denied from certain quarters like the Punjab, Hyderabad and some other provinces. The Indians were divided in their aims, especially after the elimination of the English rule. There was no answer to the main question regarding the vesting of sovereignty after the success of this revolt. The fire of patriotism was certainly burning, and that was the reason why this revolt lasted for some time and the Indians gave a tough fight If the British succeeded, it was not a cheap victory; but they had it after shedding considerable

blood. The Indians too learnt a lesson and that was the need for unity of purpose, and concentrated and sustained effort to attain an objective.

After-Effects of the Mutiny

As a result of the circumstances brought to light by the Mutiny, the British Parliament decided to transfer the Government of India directly to the Crown, and thus ended that phase of Company rule in India. The Queen's proclamation read by Lord Canning at Allahabad on November 1, 1858, is described as the Indian Magna Carta, in which she promised to pardon all except the ardent criminals, guaranteed sanctity of treaty with the Native States, ensured complete freedom of religious worship and equality and impartial protection of law respecting the Indian customs, and expressed an earnest desire to stimulate the political progress of India. This had a soothing effect, and Lord Canning set to work on the task of pacifying and reorganising the whole country. This reorganization took place in the army, finance, politics, law and education. In the political field, the Legislative Council Act of 1861 conferred the privilege on a few Indians to become members of the Central Legislative Council. The birth of three Universities, earlier in 1857, had ushered in a new era in the field of education. Canning's policy was responsible for the recovery of India to a considerable extent.

Political Awakening

The second half of the nineteenth century saw a good deal of political, social and religious awakening in India. The spade work was done earlier by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in the first quarter while in the last quarter there was intense political consciousness. The need for the Indians to play an important role in the administrative system of the country, either as members of the Central and Provincial Legislative bodies, or as members of the Indian Civil Service, was intensely felt. The Hindu intelligents were marching ahead, while the Muslims after the Mutiny were looked down upon with suspicion. The Indian Press, too, was in the hands of the Hindus. A clash between the wider nationalist and patriotic interests and the narrow sectarian

and communal elements became inevitable with the birth of an Anglo-Muslim movement, popularly called the 'Aligarh movement' under the leadership of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. He served the cause of his co-religionists by founding the Muslim Anglo Oriental college at Aligarh in 1875, which became the nucleus of the Muslim University and a centre of separationist movement. The Aligarh movement was essentially political, unlike the Brahma Samaj in Bengal, Deva Samaj in Maharashtra and Arya Samaj in the Punjab which were purely of a socio-religious nature aiming to reform the Hindu society. The roots of the Aligarh movement were considerably deeper, and it received encouragement from the English as well, who were interested in widening the gulf between the Hindus and Muslims to eliminate the chances of another political rehearsal against the English rule in India. The result was that the Muslims were politically awakened.

The Indian National Congress

The birth of the Indian National Congress in the Christmas of 1885, was the culminating point of India's political awakening. The Congress was interested only in certain political reforms and the Indian share in the Civil service. It had no other programme, and the annual gatherings were only confined to political stock-taking and comparing notes by the moderate politicians who saw in the British rule the fulfilment of their aspirations. In the words of Hume, 'the success of the Congress movement meant the removal of the cause of disruption which tended to alienate India from England, the perfect consolidation of union between the two countries.' Whatever political excitement there might have been, there is no doubt that the progress of the Congress from its inception in 1885 to 1905 was one based on a firm faith in constitutional agitation and in the unfailing regard for justice attributed to the British. Even one of the Congress Presidents declared, 'A more honest or sturdy nation does not exist under the Sun than this English nation.'

Political events in the first decade of the twentieth century are important, and they seem to have influenced

the trend of Indian politics. The Boer war in South Africa and the defeat of Russia at the hands of Japan established two things; the triumph of an Asian power had an heartening effect on the Indian minds, and the failure of the British in bringing the Boer war to a successful termination created a little suspicion as regards the potentiality of the British nation. The Indians felt that their self respect as a nation could well be established. Self-government is the order of nature, the will of Divine Providence. Every nation must be 'the arbiter of its own destinies'. The word Swaraj or self-rule became the goal of the Indian National Congress in 1906. In 1907, at the famous Surat session, the cleavage between the moderates and leftists was sharp. It resulted in the triumph of the moderates but the leftists under Bal Gangadhar Tilak parted company. The partition of Bengal had wounded the feelings of the Bengalis, and a terrorist movement was in swing. The British Government did not take things easy, and tried to nip it in the bud. Finding it a little difficult, it encouraged the Muslim separationists. The Muslim deputation to the Viceroy under Aga Khan pleading for separate electorate for the Muslims received a favourable response; and their demand was conceded in the Minto-Morley reforms.

With the outbreak of the War, the energies focussed on Indian political aspirations were shelved. In 1916, with Lord Chelmsford as the Indian Viceroy and Montague as Secretary of State, it was recognised that the old reforms did not meet the wishes of the people of India and a change was necessary. The visit of Montague to India in 1917 prepared the ground for changes in the existing constitution. The new reforms introduced Dyarchy in the Provinces. The Congress had made an initial mistake in coming to terms with the Muslim League in 1916 and in accepting the principle of separate electorate for the Muslims. The Congress, however, did not accept the reforms. Gandhiji had come on the Indian political stage, and with his activities began a new era in Indian history.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GANDHI ERA

THE political excitement in India in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was purely constitutional, aiming at a little modification in the existing constitution with increasing representation for the Indians in Legislature and administration. The first decade of the twentieth century shaped the nature of the agitation and changed the policy of the British Government too. During the period of the First World War, extremist Indian leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai were deported and leftists like Bal-Gangadhar Tilak were convicted and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. The British Government kept the Indians on false promises and the Rowlatt Act had stirred up the nation, with the political situation getting further complicated due to the Khilafat movement. Gandhiji had taken over the leadership of the Congress which became more democratic with a strong element of the middle classes including peasants and industrial workers in their individual capacity. Gandhiji introduced into politics a new technique of action which was peaceful, and yet aimed at defying the order of submission and resistance of wrong doings in a peaceful and courageous manner. He aimed at challenging and resisting foreign rule through national unity which could be achieved by raising the social level of the down-trodden, the untouchables. and by compromise with the minorities on the political front.

The first Decade

Gandhiji, as a first step, wanted to take stock of the situation and feel the pulse of the nation. The Satyagraha technique introduced by him was very exciting but it soon gave way to violence. The Chauri Chaura incident put a serious bolt on the Congress gear, and Gandhiji at once stopped his civil disobedience movement. Then followed an era of frustration. The country, it seems, was not pre-

pared for a united front. The Congress alliance with the Muslim League was broken, and the conviction and imprisonment of Gandhiji in 1922 left India without a leader of his type who could carry out his programme to a successful ending. There was disruption in the Congress organization as well. While the Congress was opposed to the institution of dyarchy in provinces and its working, the moderates gave a trial to it. They insisted on entering the Central and Provincial legislatures. The result was the formation of the Swaraj Party which created a wedge in the Congress. The fast deteriorating political situation and the engineered communal riots at many places, shook the foundation of the nationalist aspirations, and the result was a political vacuum. The Swarajists were successful in securing substantial seats, and as members of the opposition they proved a little effective.

In the year 1927, a Royal Commission under Sir John (later Lord) Simon was appointed to review the working of the Constitution, and suggest its recommedations for political reforms. The non-inclusion of a single Indian member caused hurt to national sentiments, and the commission which visited India early in 1928, and again in the following winter was boycotted. The All Party Conference too was unsuccessful. The Muslim League insisted on separate electorate, complete autonomy in provinces, and the sphere of the Central government being confined only to matters of general and common interests. This was a device aimed at a weak Centre with strong Muslim majority provinces.

At the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress in 1929, under Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru's presidentship, India pledged itself to the attainment of complete independence. In England the Labour Coalition government had assumed office, and it declared that it would grant India Dominion status after receiving the report of the Simon Commission, and discuss with all shades of Indian opinion, including the Princes, the Indian political problem in all its aspects. The Simon Commission had recommended the extension of Dyarchy with full responsible government in the provinces subject to the special powers of the

Governor. Even the term Dominion status was not mentioned. This created a sense of frustration in the Indian minds. The Congress took no notice of it, as it was wedded to its resolution of complete Independence for India. The result was that while the moderates accepted the invitation to attend the conference in London and sit round the table to frame a scheme of dominion constitution for India, the Congress under Gandhiji's leadership launched the Civil Disobedience Movement which continued for a year.

Gandhi-Irwin Pact and After

In March 1931, the Government entered into a truce with the Congress, and the Gandhi-Irwin Pact improved the relations and restored normal conditions. Gandhiji along with Pandit Malaviya and Shrimati Sarojini Naidu attended the Second Round Table Conference as Congress representatives. The discussion centred round Dyarchy at the Centre and the representation of minorities. The first point was unacceptable, and Gandhiji could not concede the demand for separate electorate for the minority communities including the depressed classes. He parted company, and the Civil Disobedience Movement was resumed once again. The British Government issued a scheme known as the Macdonald Award which aimed at separating the depressed classes from the caste Hindus. This was strongly resented by Gandhiji, and his Epic Fast resulted in the Poona Pact, under which the depressed classes got more representation but they were to be elected by the Hindus as a whole. The last session of the Round Table Conference was a short one, and after its deliberations the British Government elaborated the Draft proposals which were carefully examined by a Joint Committee of Parliament and the Government of India Bill of 1935 was finally passed by the British Parliament.

The New Act gave full autonomy to the Provinces, introduced Dyarchy at the Centre with the States also joining it, and kept the relations between the States and the Paramount Power untouched. The Congress at first did not accept these proposals. The Federation Part dealing with the Centre was not given a trial, but in the provinces,

where the Congress attained absolute majority, it refused at first to accept office because of the special powers vested in the Provincial Governor. On an assurance being given that these powers would not be exercised, the Congress assumed office. The Muslim League in collaboration with other Muslim vested interests formed ministries in three provinces. This state of affairs continued till September 1939, when the Second World War broke out, and India was declared a Belligerent by the Governor General without ascertaining the opinion of the people through the elected Provincial bodies. The result was the withdrawal of Congress ministers in eight out of eleven provinces.

Second World War and the Cripps' Offer

In the tussle between the Indian nationalists and British Imperialists, various other Indian political elements did not show unity of aims and means for wresting the political power from British hands. The Muslim League's claim for Pakistan as a separate state which was formulated at its Lahore session in 1940 had to be confronted by the Congress and the British Government. Lord Linlithgow enlarged his Executive Council by appointing eleven Indians of his choice, with four Europeans holding the important portfolios of Home, Finance, Defence and Communications. The individual Civil Disobedience Movement led by Gandhiji after the Ramgarh session of the Congress, the Japanese entry into the war, coupled with the British reverses, hastened the need for gaining India's confidence, and Sir Stafford Cripps was sent to India with certain proposals by the British Government.

The main provisions of the Cripps' offer were the setting up of a Dominion or Dominions with one or two constitution-making bodies in future to be elected by a system of proportional representation. During the period of the war, there was to be immediate and effective participation of the political parties. The Congress rejected the offer, as it left out the states, and there was the provision for the provinces opting out. The Muslim League rejected it, as the demand for creating Pakistan was not given any

consideration. The Cripps' proposals were considered as a post-dated cheque on a crashing bank, and there was no real transfer of power, as the Defence of India was not to be in Indian hands.

Quit India and the Aftermath

The distrust implicit in the announcement dealt the hardest blow, and the Congress passed the 'Quit India' Resolution on August 8, 1942. Gandhiji had made it very clear that he would first contact the Viceroy before taking any further step, but before the next dawn, all the leaders were arrested and spirited away to an unknown destination. This was the signal for the outburst of a mass revolt which had no parallel in British Indian history. The events that followed, namely the famous Bengal famine which entailed three million lives, and the dullest years of 1943-44 and 45 brought frustration to the Indian people. Gandhiji was released in the middle of 1944, but not until he had another fast to wash off the charge levelled against him in this mass outburst of violence, which was against the gospel of non-violence.

The end of the war and the change of the political party in power opened a new chapter in Indo-British relations. On March 16, 1946, Mr. Attlee made a statement in the British Parliament suggesting the new method for solving the Indian political dead-lock. Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. Alexander came to India to hammer out a plan for the transfer of power into Indian hands. The difficulty created with a view to balancing Hindu-Muslim interests erupted into view in all its ugliness. The grouping of provinces was a stumbling block. The Congress stood firm by its decision. The large plan with the setting up of a Constituent Assembly was, however, accepted by the Congress. The Muslim League rejected the Plan in toto, and resorted to direct action.

August 16, 1946, the Direct Action Day in Calcutta, was marked by an orgy of loot, plunder, rape and murder entailing loss of thousands of lives. The brutality had its repercussions in Bihar followed by the North-Western

Frontier Province and the Punjab. Noakhali in East Bengal was the worst affected area. Lord Wavell had already invited Pt. Nehru to join his cabinet, and the Muslim League had at first rejected the invitation, but later on accepted it. The partnership of persons representing divergent interests and ideologies could not last long. On February 20, 1947, His Majesty's Government announced their decision to take necessary steps to effect the transfer of power to responsible hands not later than June 1948.

The Indian Independence

Lord Mountbatten replaced Lord Wavell. The new Viceroy went into serious work immediately after the assumption of his office. The Constituent Assembly which had opened in Delhi on December 19, 1946 was going ahead without the cooperation of the Muslim League. There was no choice left but to partition the country. On June 3, 1947, a statement was issued indicating the lines on which division was to be made. According to Para 10 of the statement, the Indian Independence Bill was introduced and passed by the British Parliament without a division. So on August 15, 1947, were set up two independent states, the Union of India and that of Pakistan, by a peaceful transfer of power, but not peacefully implemented.

It is a mistake to think of Indian Independence as a voluntary offering of the British Government. Margaret Bourke has rightly pointed out in her book "Interview with India": "Each concession, each gain towards self government had come only after struggle and sacrifice. From the mass movement following the First World War, through the countless arrests and soul-wasting years in which Nehru had fully shared, each rung in the ladder had been hammered into the place until the revolt within the ranks of the Royal Indian Navy spectacularly heralded the finish. With Britain's armed forces streaming off their groups to join hands with the people in the streets, it was plain that there was no longer any choice except the withdrawal for the British Raj."

Thus ended the arduous struggle for the attainment of independence under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The Gandhi Era ended with his mission for India's political emancipation achieved, but his dream of Ram Raj was left for his political successor Pt. Nehru to materialise. Gandhiji was not destined to breathe in the free atmosphere of India even for six months. The holocaust that followed after the partition, resulting in the uprooting of millions of people from their homelands in both the dominions had a terrible effect on the morale of the country. On the 30th of January, 1948, in the evening, as he was going to attend his prayer meeting three shots fired by a Hindu fanatic extinguished the light which had guided and shone with all its lustre on the Indian Sub-continent for over thirty years.

CHAPTER XXV

THE NEHRU AGE

NEHRU, the suave scholar, the idol of the masses, the man of action, ever ready to shake off any sense of frustration, is probably the only politician in Asian history, if not in world's, to dominate the political scene of his country for nearly thirty years. In Gandhiji's life time, he had adorned the Congress Presidentship thrice. At the invitation of Lord Wavell, he joined the Central Government, but actually he formed the Government, as the other members representing the Congress were purely of his choice; and even with the participation of Muslim League his position as the head of the Cabinet remained undisturbed. Pt. Nehru has always been a believer in Asian solidarity, and the convening of the First Asian conference in 1946 was the outcome of this strong feeling. He accepted the partition in the hope that a truncated free country was preferable to alien domination.

Integration of the States

The first task before the new free country was to integrate the loose political fabrics. The existence of innumerable states—big and small—endangered the security of the country, and as a result of the bold and sagacious policy adopted by Sardar Patel, the picture was completely changed. 566 Indian states, covering about one-fourth of the country, were completely assimilated either by the process of turning them into viable groups, or by constituting unions of states, or through merging them into provinces. Some of them were taken over by the Centre. As a result of the States' Reorganisation Commission's Report submitted in 1955, there was another change in the complexion of the political set-up taking into consideration the linguistic aspect of the question. This satisfied a few but caused discontentment, as is natural, to others.

The Enactment of the Constitution

The Nehru age, as it may rightly be called, is noted for its several features. The enactment of the Indian Constitution is one of its achievements. The Indian Republic, the supreme sovereign body, guarantees equal rights and privileges to all, irrespective of caste, creed, race, religion or sex. The secular character of the State has a salutary effect on Indian minds and world conscience. India's potentiality, as the greatest living democracy in the world, has been well realised, and every Indian feels that the doors are open for him, and he can reach the highest rung of the ladder. The two elections held after the enactment of the new Indian Republican Constitution have amply demonstrated the secular character of the State and the democratic spirit of the people.

Asian awakening and Panchasila

Nehru is not unconscious of the awakening in Asia which was dominated for centuries by colonial interests, and it became all the more necessary to harness the political resources, and present to the world, what one calls, a United Asian front without any ulterior motive, but still as a strong bulwark against the dominating spirit of either of the two power blocks. The Asian unity conference, followed by the Bandung conference, was a concrete step in this direction. This has consolidated the nations of this vast continent, even though the situation has become a little complicated with the SEATO, Bagdad and other pacts on the one hand, and the failure to give recognition to the Chinese People's Republic by the western powers on the other. Asian unity and solidarity retain much of their vitality. It was due to this political consciousness that the Dutch were forced to concede Independence to Indonesia, the French to Indo-China, and the British to Malaya. India under its leader, Pt. Nehru, has always extended a helping hand in materialising the nationalist aspirations of the peoples of Asia. The strong ties are established on the basis of *Panchasila* or the Five Virtues. These principles lay down the existence and independence of every sovereign State of the world community on certain well-defined

principles. These include the unfettered exercise of sovereignty by each independent State according to its own political pattern. The peaceful co-existence is the central doctrine of Panchasila: "Peace has to be sought not through division of the world, or through power blocs, but by aiming at collective security on the world basis, enlarging the conception of freedom and ending the domination of one country by another." The success of Panchasila depends on creating conditions where the other party cannot break its word, or finds it difficult to break it. Panchasila has a strong moral base, and is probably the best solution of the present world crisis.

India and World Peace

Nehru has been more than successful in bridging up the gap between the so-called two power blocs, represented by the capitalist interests of the United States and its partners, and the proletariat ideology of the U.S.S.R, and its satellites. There have been occasions, more than once, which might have caused world conflagration, but it was due to the earnest efforts of this angel of peace that the evil situation was averted. The sweet voice of the Indian Prime Minister and his approach to the problems, coupled with his willingness to extend his peaceful co-operation, saved the situation in Korea, Indo-China and Egypt. Indian soldiers played an important role as messengers of peace, and they were welcomed in areas of dispute. It is no mean an achievement for India, and that, too, due to her Prime Minister, that the West looks to this country as a strong citadel of democracy, and the East as the most ancient and senior partner, ever anxious and ready to help, guide and bring about Asian Unity. India has all through pursued a bold policy, and it has been made repeatedly clear that "the objectives of India's foreign policy are the pursuit of peace, not alignment with a major power or group of powers, but through an independent approach to reach controversial or disputed issues, liberation of the subject peoples, maintenance of freedom, both national and individual, and the elimination of racial discrimination, of want, disease, and ignorance which afflict the greater part of the world popu-

lation." This attitude of peace and friendship without alignment with any power bloc has been successful in bringing about an understanding, even if not a very close one, between the two ideological groups in world politics.

The Five-Year Plans

The International problems have not made the Prime Minister oblivious to the domestic needs. The nation can neither be kept starved or under-nourished, nor can it be left unenlightened through the torch of learning. With the increasing growth of her population, India has to produce enough food. Land is no doubt available in plenty; it has only to be reclaimed and brought under cultivation through scientific and mechanised means. This has necessitated the construction of dams which will provide water for irrigation and also generate hydro-electric power which could be utilised for industrial purposes. Planning is, therefore, essential, and, to fulfil the objective of making India self-sufficient in food, and industrially prosperous, it has been necessary to draw plans for the development of the country in both Private and Public sectors. A detailed survey of the two Five-Year Plans would be out of place here. The valley projects have been successful, and it has now been possible to construct many dams in different states. The Prime Minister has also pointed out the need for self-sufficiency and high production. "For greater production at competitive prices by means of higher productivity, unless production is increased, India cannot compete with other countries or bring down prices. Wages cannot and must not be lowered, and it is for the state to increase the production by means of new ventures". The last sentence expresses the key-note of India's industrial policy. India cannot rely on foreign capital alone for the development of her industries. She has to tap her internal resources to the full. The country is boldly stepping forward towards the fulfilment of the Second Five-Year Plan despite several hurdles, mainly financial and lack of profuse enthusiasm in the masses, and the time is not far off when she would be agriculturally self-sufficient and industrially prosperous.

The Socialistic Pattern of Society

The economic problem of the country has not eliminated consideration of other social problems. Illiteracy still baffles the country. The problem is one of gigantic importance and has to be tackled boldly and in a systematic manner. The adult education and the compulsory primary education schemes, coupled with the opening of new schools and colleges and other educational centres with a rural bias, are all covered in the plans, and it would be possible in course of time to turn the corner. Steps have been taken in the direction of social amelioration and the bridging up of the gap between the higher and the lower groups both in the social and economic spheres. Gandhiji was successful to a considerable extent in raising the status of the depressed classes. The conception of Sarvodaya or the uplifting of all, and the Bhoodan movement, initiated by Gandhiji's disciple, Vinoba Bhave, are concrete steps aiming at equitable distribution of land, providing employment to all and reducing the big social and economic gaps. The Nehru government faced the problem of the rehabilitation of refugees with courage and determination and has succeeded. Here, again, the Prime Minister has pointed out "Communal discord is the surest way of leading India to ruin and destruction", and so India cannot entertain any idea of social inequality and religious intoleration.

Nehru has guided the Nation through difficult times and under critical conditions. He has piloted the ship of the State through perilous waters, amidst the storm of international discord with the war clouds hovering over the horizon. We have covered a long distance but have still to march ahead to reach our goal of an Industrial and Prosperous India.

CHAPTER XXVI

A RETROSPECT AND THE FUTURE

DURING her long and chequered history of nearly five thousand years, India has passed through several political phases. She has preserved herself and her civilisation despite the passage of such a long time. While others have perished with their civilisations buried under the earth, or the remnants preserved partially in the museums, India is the only country of hoary antiquity while her civilisation is as new as that of any progressive people in the world to-day. Successive inroads of foreigners, including the Central Asian barbarians, and the Mohammadans and the Europeans, failed to shake the foundation on which the edifice of this ancient civilisation was set up. They were either completely absorbed in the socio-religious structure of the country, or synthesized with the Indian culture. The two important features of this culture were eclecticism and unity in diversity, and these have sustained the faith and force in the Indian spirit. Beneath the endless diversities, the Indian people have all along possessed a fundamental unity that transcends them all.

It has been made clear that the Aryanisation of the South, or, what other historians suggest, the Indianisation of the Aryans, was the culminating point of integration paving the way for the birth of a new spirit focussed in Hinduism. This was nothing new. The art and religion that blossomed in India in historical times are as much a legacy of the Pre-Aryan culture, as that of the Aryan one in India. This unity of spirit and thought remained undisturbed even with the advent of the Musalmans in India who behaved fanatically in Europe and Central Asia. Mahmud, who is condemned by historians for his iconoclastic zeal, was not fanatical in matters pertaining to administration. The appointment of the Hindu Tilak for suppressing the Muslims and the retention of a large corps

of Hindu cavalry may be cited as concrete illustrations for emphasing this point. During the whole period of Muslim rule in India, there have been occasions when the Muslim rulers adopted a bigoted attitude, but they failed in their attempts to set up a theocratic state, and disturb the Indian social structure. The wave of Bhakti movement, which swept over the whole of India in the Mediaeval period, drew both Hindus and Muslims alike, and the Muslims found in it the monotheistic conception of Islam. In the words of Rajjab, the chief disciple of Dadu, "All the world is Veda, and all creation the Koran". The Satya Pir cult, which stressed on worshipping a common God by Hindus and Muslims alike, and patronised by Hosen Shah, was in no way different from the Vedic conception of 'Sages name variously that which is One.'

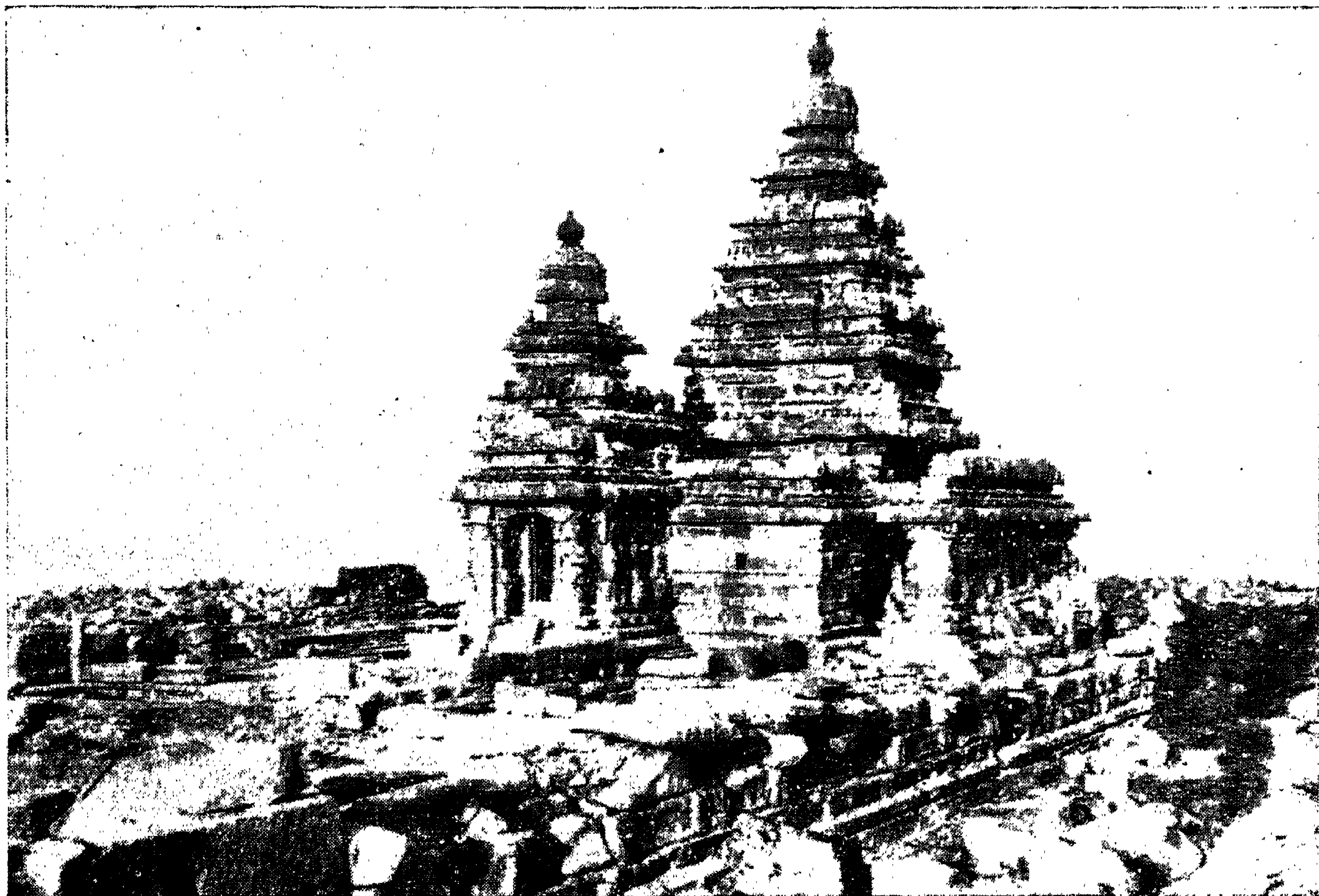
The Indian culture has sustained its force and vitality. Its contact with the West, as a result of the British rule in India, has been helpful in assessing its true value. As Max Muller rightly pointed out as early as 1882, "whatever sphere of the human mind you may select for your special study, whether it be language, or religion, or mythology, or philosophy, whether it be laws or customs, everywhere, you have to go to India, whether you like it or not, because some of the most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India, and in India only". The West discovered India, but not too late either. India's cultural values were properly assessed as a result of her contact with the West, and an initiative was taken by the western scholars in opening a vista of research not only in the history and culture of India, but also in the expansion of Indian culture outside India. The second phase is equally important, as it has successfully materialised the conception of Asian unity and solidarity.

More than a decade of our newly born independence has passed. We have harnessed our resources for the welfare of the Country. The journey is long and the task arduous and innumerable obstacles lie in our way. Disruptive tendencies are widely awakened, while interested powers can-

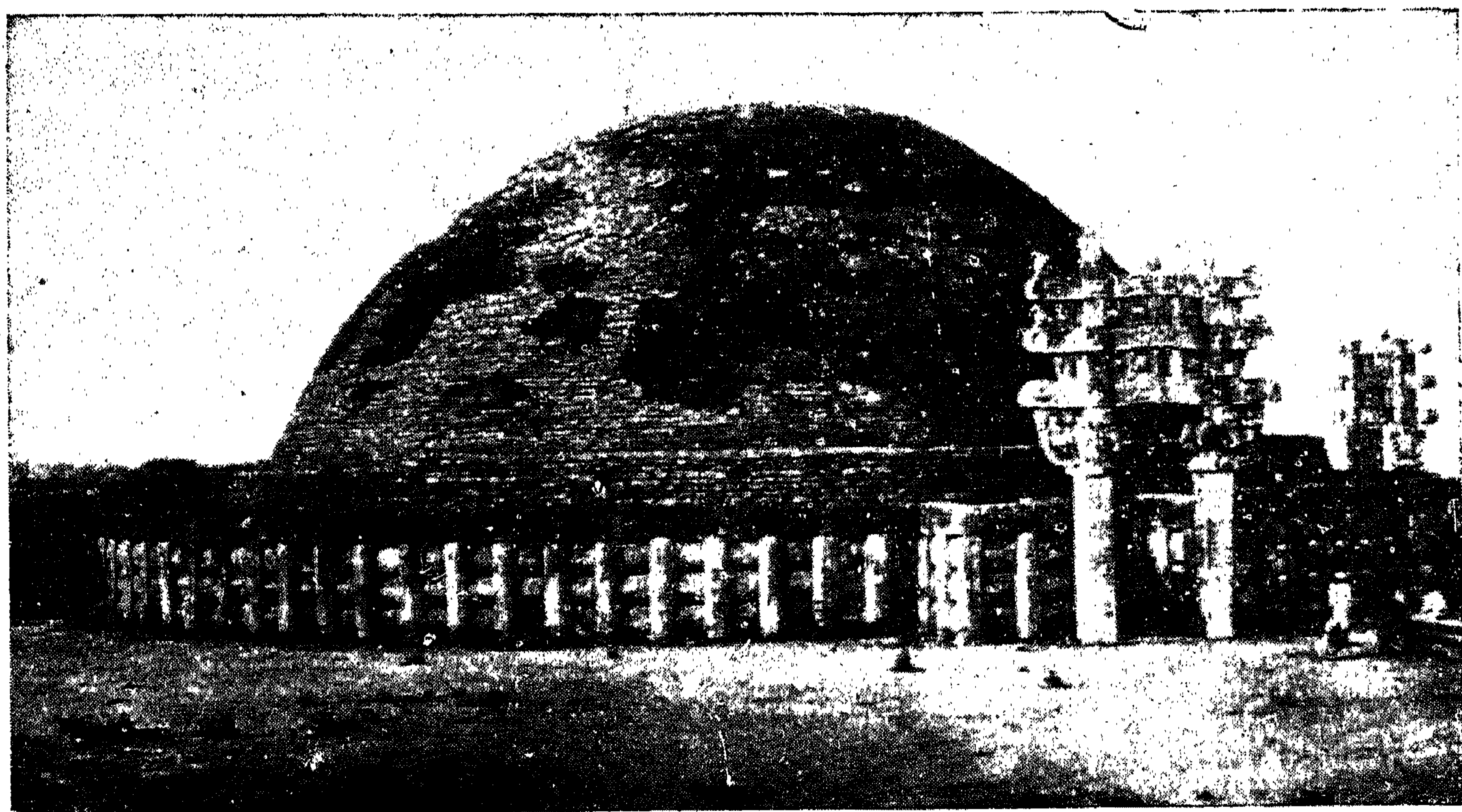
not stand our steady progress, as it might dislocate the political balance. Can the ship of the State steer clear through this rough sea of turmoil? The answer is yes. Indian history has a lesson to offer. Faith and determination, and the vitality of the Indian civilisation would pilot the ship steadily, and carry it safely to its destination.

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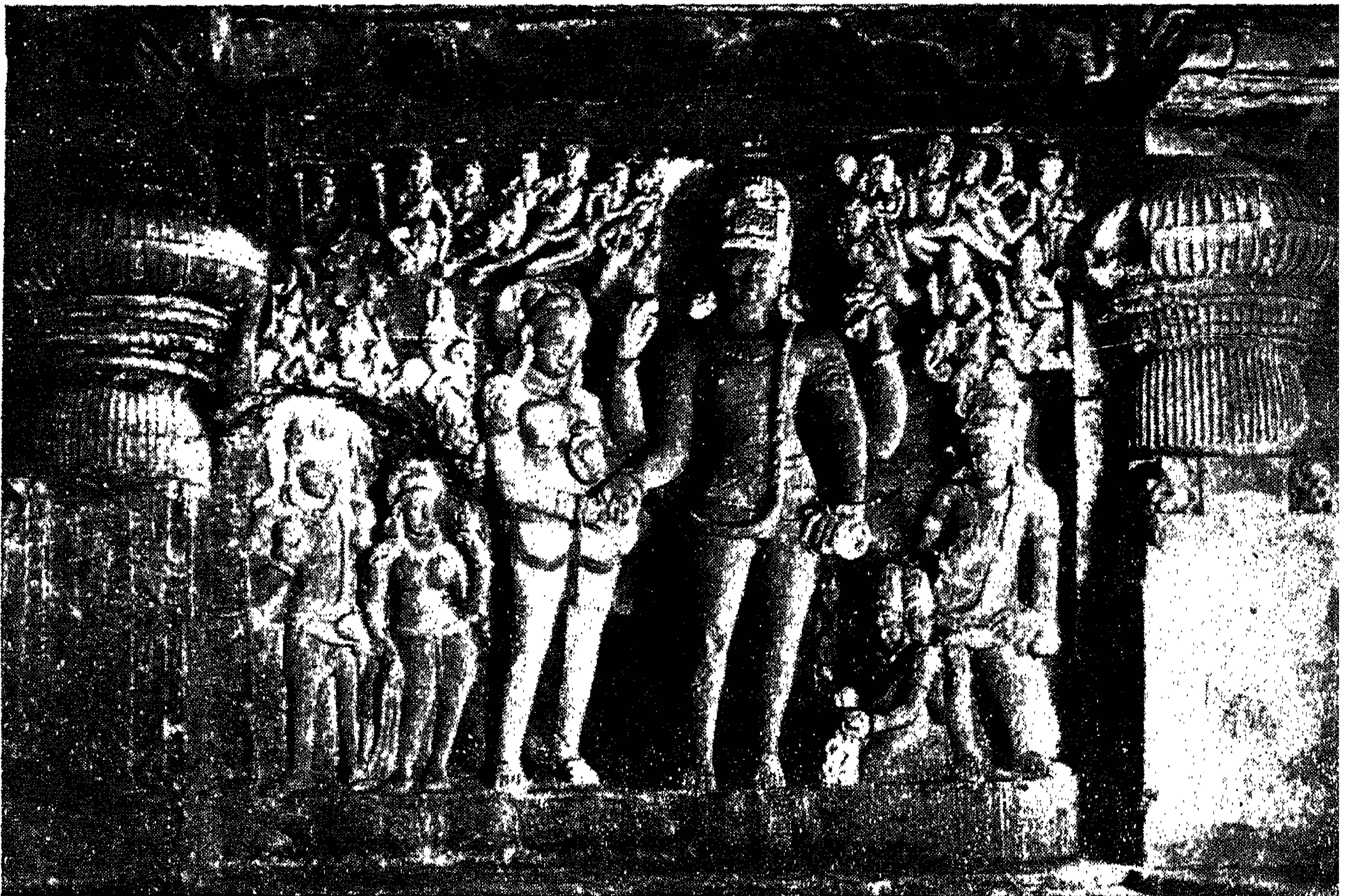


The Great Buddhist Stupa—Sanchi.

(Courtesy—Archaeological Department, Govt. of India)



Sun Temple—Konarak (Orissa).



Marriage of Siva and Parvati—Ellora.
(Courtesy—Archaeological Department, Govt. of India)